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ABSTRACT

Two surveys were conducted to identify the educational research and development needs of the area served by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. The first was a survey completed by 1,884 (29.1%) educators in the region, and the second was a telephone survey of 400 households. This report concentrates on the responses of educators. Four broad areas of concern emerged from the survey data: (1) developing a standards-based instructional program; (2) engaging all students in learning; (3) creating a supportive and challenging learning program; and (4) ensuring support for the instructional program. The types of help educators said would be of greatest benefit for addressing these concerns were assistance with identifying promising practices, development models or solutions, and training. Superintendents, principals, teachers, and school board members all indicated that these were their most important technical assistance needs. Five appendixes contain information about survey design, copies of the surveys, and discussions of priority areas for educational improvement and issues affecting public education. (Contains 10 tables, 18 figures, and 26 references.) (SLD)

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THE Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

PROGRAM REPORT

ED 447 158

THE EVOLVING CONTEXT FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE NORTHWEST

The 1999 Regional Education Needs Assessment

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Conducted by
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
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THE EVOLVING CONTEXT FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE NORTHWEST

The 1999 Regional Education Needs Assessment

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Summary of Findings and Implications for the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's Work

State-led initiatives to move Northwest schools toward standards-based instruction and shifting demographics appear to have had a substantial influence on educator concerns as shown in results of the 1999 Regional Needs Assessment Educator Survey. Four broad areas of concern emerged from the survey data:

1) Developing a standards-based instructional program
2) Engaging *all* students in learning
3) Creating a supportive and challenging learning environment
4) Ensuring support for the instructional program

The type of help that educators said would be of greatest benefit for addressing these concerns were assistance with identifying promising practices, developing models or solutions, and training. Superintendents, principals, teachers, and school board members all indicated that these were their most important technical assistance needs.

Developing a standards-based instructional program. Educators are focusing their energies on responding to state requirements for implementing a standards-based instructional program. Many who have progressed in this effort are finding that adopting a standards-based approach has helped their schools organize their work and focus their instructional program in a way that is beneficial to student learning. The public is concerned, however, that the student performance standards that states have adopted are not appropriate to all students.

Educators, especially administrators, say their area of greatest need for technical assistance is aligning their instructional program with standards. They want help with strategies for using developmentally appropriate instruction in a standards-based environment. They want help developing assessments that demonstrate performance, as well as help developing effective systems for tracking student performance over time, using a variety of measures. Educators are interested also in models for integrating the core skills of reading, writing, math computation, and technology use across the curriculum.

Engaging *all* students in learning. This area of concern ranked high for all educator groups. The biggest issue, especially for principals and middle school educators and those in large districts, is finding effective instructional strategies for students who are not succeeding. Given the growing diversity of students, the problems of at-risk students are growing increasingly complex, and so must the strategies to deal with them.

Educators want help in learning how to recognize early those students who are not succeeding and to counsel them appropriately, match them with educational alternatives appropriate to their learning styles, and use alternative instructional strategies. They want to create a climate for learning that promotes personal responsibility and provides support for each student's needs. They also want to find ways to foster more family support for their children's efforts to learn.

Creating a supportive and challenging learning environment. Educators recognize that what goes on in a child's life outside the classroom can be just as beneficial or detrimental to learning as what goes on inside the classroom. They know their schools must be prepared to support and enhance experiences, both inside *and* outside the classrooms, that can contribute to a child's learning.

Developing a school and classroom environment that is safe, supportive, and productive is a high priority for educators. They want schools that have clear rules for behavior, positive and effective discipline policies, and opportunities for students to develop effective social skills, including conflict management. They know that positive and frequent interaction between teachers and students is important to learning.

When asked what factor contributed most to positive student performance in their schools, educators, especially school board members, ranked having committed quality staff as the number one factor. Teachers said they want more and better professional development to help kids achieve to high standards. The public agrees that more training and classroom support would benefit student learning, but they also say that more supervision, evaluation, and the weeding out of poor teachers would do a lot to help improve teaching and learning.

Survey responses indicate that teachers believe family support for student learning is crucial to a child's success in school. The public agrees. Public survey respondents said that lack of family involvement was the thing that interferes most with students trying to do their best in school. Most parents do participate, at some level, in their child's school, primarily by attending parent/teacher conferences. Poor families, however, were much less likely to participate in school activities beyond attending parent/teacher conferences. Survey results show that the public believes that community schools should serve as a hub for family support services, which could engage parents more actively in their children's academic and social lives.

Educators also said that they need to find ways to strengthen community understanding and support for public education. This task is becoming increasingly difficult, as fewer and fewer households have school-age children. People without children in the household participate much less in school activities. Given the rapidly increasing pool of energetic seniors and retirees, strategies such as the AmeriCorps and NWREL's America Reads Program should be expanded and promoted to engage these adults in supporting children's learning.

Ensuring support for the instructional program. The expression of concern about adequate funding for education has been consistent on three educator surveys conducted over the past six years. When surveyed on this issue, the public also expressed concerns about the adequacy of funding for schools. However, this concern is generally not reflected in voting results. Parents, the legislature, and the public keep asking our schools to do more: more and better curriculum and instruction; more accountability; more technology; more parent involvement; more student and family support services, and on and on. Educators have repeatedly said they need more time and people to give the public what it says it wants from schools. However, time and people cost money, and extra money has become very scarce for most schools in the Northwest.

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) can do little to increase school budgets, but it can do much to facilitate schools' efforts to identify best practice models for curriculum, instruction, family involvement, and school climate, among others. Identifying and sharing practices that have been field-tested for effectiveness and efficiency can save schools time and money, and ensure a higher probability of improved learning. But best practices are not likely to be successfully adopted unless educators have the time they need to work collaboratively to select them, learn how to use them, put them into practice, and assess their effectiveness. Consequently, schools also need assistance with helping the public understand how important funding adequate time for training, collaboration, and reflection is to the improvement of instructional programs.

THE EVOLVING CONTEXT FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE NORTHWEST

Public schools do not operate in a vacuum. The constantly changing demographic, economic, and political landscape in which public schools operate, determines, in part, the types of challenges with which they will be faced as they educate our Northwest children, youth, and adults. In the following sections, we will discuss the contextual factors that appear to be influencing what educators say are their biggest challenges over the next few years, and what they say their needs for educational research and development will be.

Changing Enrollments

The Northwest's school-age population is growing, and by 1998, schools enrolled more than 2.1 million students. School enrollment in the region grew 15 percent between 1990 and 1997, which was faster than the 12 percent growth rate at the national level. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) estimates, the Northwest is expected to grow another 5 percent by 2005 (the same rate as the nation). In absolute numbers, 270,000 more students were enrolled in Northwest schools in 1997 than in 1990, and an additional increase of 110,000 students is expected by 2005.

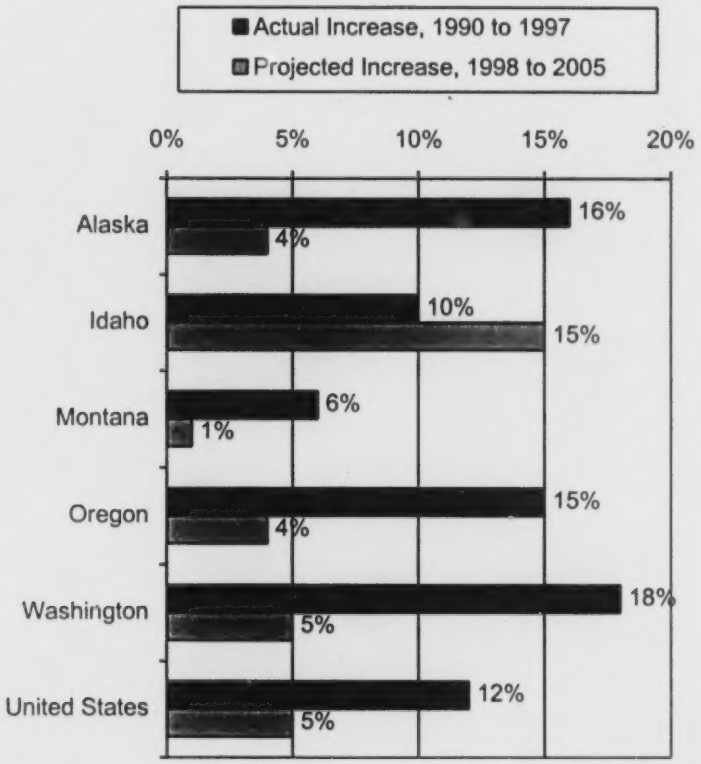
Growth has not been equal across the region. The state of Washington showed the fastest growth between 1990 and 1997, and Montana the slowest. Idaho is projected to grow fastest from 1997 through 2005 and Montana, again the slowest (see Figure 1-1). Growth has already slowed in all five states from the very high rates of the early 1990s. Two states, Montana and Idaho, actually showed slight enrollment declines from 1996 to 1997.

Despite the differences in growth rates among the states, their proportions of the region's enrollment have not changed sharply. About half (48 percent) of the region's students are in Washington State and one quarter (26 percent) are in Oregon. Alaska, Idaho and Montana enroll the remaining one-quarter (26 percent).

On average, districts in the region's largest metropolitan areas (Seattle-Everett and Portland-Vancouver) grew the fastest. In fact, nearly two-thirds (44 of 67) of districts in the large metro areas grew at a faster rate than the regional average between 1991 and 1996. At the same time, one in three districts in rural areas and small towns lost enrollment.

Shifts in enrollment, in either direction, can cause financial pressures and public relations problems for schools. Those with growing enrollments face parental concern over crowded classrooms and public ire when more funding for capital and operating

Figure 1-1. Change in Public School Enrollment in the Northwest Region, 1990 to 1997 (Actual) and 1998 to 2005 (Projected)



Sources: National Center for Education Statistics (1998d and 1999d)

expenditures is requested. Those losing enrollment lose state per pupil contributions, which often results in staffing cuts, maintenance delays, and cuts in nonessential but popular programs, services, and extra-curricular activities.

The combination of growing enrollments, limited funding, and increasing educator attrition and retirement rates is contributing to another dilemma faced by schools. Given the current teacher graduation rates from schools of education, at least two states, Oregon and Washington, appear to be headed for a significant teacher shortage over the next five years (Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1998). The Oregon Teachers Standards and Practices Commission recognizes a current shortage in 11 areas. There is a great need for teachers who are bilingual and can instruct in an English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) environment. There is also a shortage of teachers of mathematics; science, particularly chemistry and physics; foreign languages, especially Spanish; special education; and middle school math and science. There is also a shortage of those who can teach technology courses and courses necessary for advanced certificate

programs. In addition to teachers, there is a current shortage of counselors, speech pathologists, and administrators, particularly high school principals.

The authors of a study on Oregon's teacher supply and demand (Oregon University System, et al., 1999) conclude that a general teacher shortage will be avoided if Oregon continues to recruit two-fifths of its new licensees from out-of-state. In addition, substantial numbers of educators need to be brought back into teaching from the shrinking reserve pool. The reserve pool includes licensed educators who have either left the teaching profession or have never accepted positions in education. Teaching positions will have to be attractive enough to lure these people from other careers they may have entered.

Washington is facing similar problems. A Washington report suggests that the shortage problem is further exacerbated by competition for teachers from California, due to that state's class-size reduction initiative, and sharply increasing teacher attrition rates at all experience levels. In fact, educators across the Northwest have cited California's teacher demand as a drain on their state's teacher supply. The Washington report concluded that:

> It is impossible to predict exactly when a teacher shortage will hit Washington State. However, several measures indicate that a shortage is near. . . . An aging workforce is complicated by high attrition rates for all age groups and experience levels. This convergence of trends suggests that when the older teachers begin to retire in larger numbers, [and] districts cannot rely on beginning teachers to meet demand, districts and the state will have to work [harder] to retain current teachers (Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1998).

Detailed analyses were not available for Alaska, Idaho, and Montana, but data collected for a depiction study of the Northwest's teacher workforce showed that new teacher graduation rates in those states are currently higher than teacher retirement rates. It is possible, though somewhat unlikely, that increasing retirement, attrition, and out-migration will lead to general teacher shortages in these states. They are more likely to face continuing shortages in certain secondary subjects and other specialty areas, and continue to have problems in recruiting educators to isolated rural districts. States with a shrinking pool of teaching candidates to choose from will be forced to select candidates who are less qualified.

In Idaho, the Albertson Foundation has awarded the state a substantial grant to study the teacher retention issue and to identify ways the state can attract, retain, and develop highly qualified teachers.

Increasing Diversity and Persistent Poverty

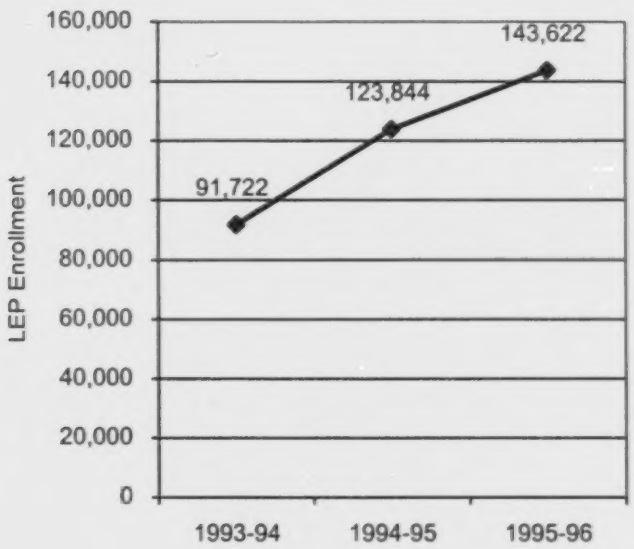
In keeping with national trends, Northwest schools are growing more diverse in their racial, ethnic, and language composition.

Increasing Language Minorities

The Northwest has absorbed many immigrant families during the 1990s. The five fastest growing immigrant populations (based on the number of immigrants admitted for permanent residence) have been from Mexico (21 percent of 1996 immigrants to the Northwest), Vietnam (10 percent), the Philippines (8 percent), the Ukraine (5 percent), and Russia (5 percent), countries where English is not the first language. Approximately a third of permanent immigrants to the Northwest in 1996 were from Asian countries, a quarter were from Latin America, a tenth were from Eastern Europe, and most of the remaining were from non-English speaking countries in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

Increasing enrollments of limited-English-proficient (LEP) students reflect the immigration trends. LEP enrollment increased significantly in the two-year period between 1993 and 1995 (see Figure 1-2). Spanish is the predominant language of LEP

Figure 1-2. Limited English Proficient Enrollment in Northwest Region Public Schools, 1993 to 1995



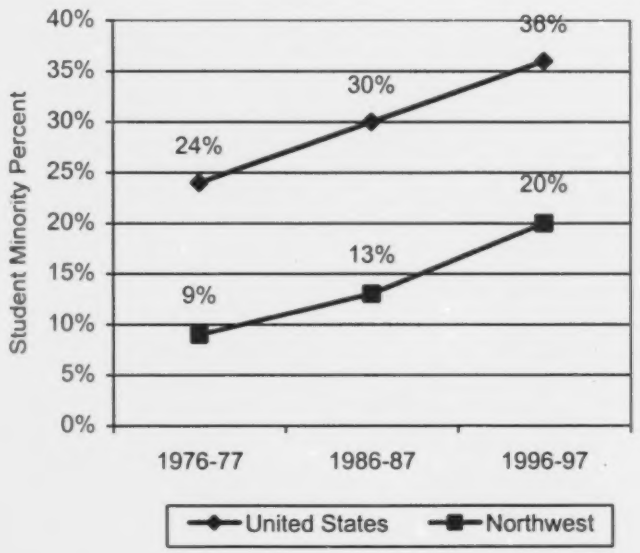
Sources: Macias and Kelly (1996) and Macias et al. (1998)

students in the three largest states in the region. Spanish speaking students make up 60 percent of the LEP students served in Washington, 80 percent of LEP students in Oregon, and nearly 90 percent of those served in Idaho (Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction 1999, Oregon Department of Education 1999, Idaho Department of Education 1998). In these three states, Russian, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese are the next most common languages of LEP students. The largest LEP group in Alaska is Alaska Native.

Increasing Racial and Ethnic Minorities

The overall population of racial and ethnic minorities, both English-speaking and non-English speaking, has grown in the Northwest. Although the total percent of minority enrollment is lower than the national average, the rate of increase is greater. During the period from 1976 to 1996, minority enrollment grew nationally by 50 percent. In the Northwest, it increased 250 percent (see Figure 1-3).

Figure 1-3. Minority Student Enrollment as a Percentage of Total Public School Enrollment in the Northwest Region and the United States, 1976 to 1996



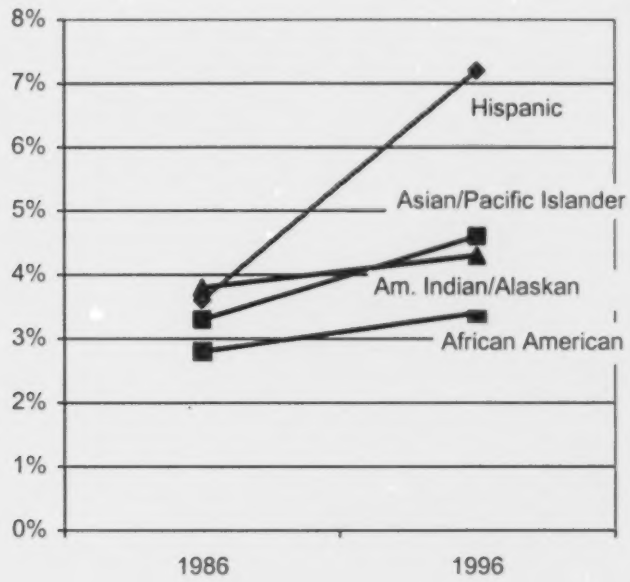
Source: National Center for Education Statistics (1980 and 1998d)

Minority students are not evenly distributed across the Northwest's approximately 5,000 schools. There is no minority enrollment in eleven percent of the schools, while two percent of the schools have 100 percent minority enrollment. Over half the region's

minority students are concentrated in one-fifth of the region's schools, each of which has more than 30 percent minority enrollment (National Center for Education Statistics 1999a).

While all minority groups are growing, the largest and fastest growing minority enrollment in the Northwest is Hispanic (see Figure 1-4).

Figure 1-4. Minority Student Enrollment by Racial/Ethnic Group as a Percentage of Total Enrollment in the Northwest Region, 1986 and 1996

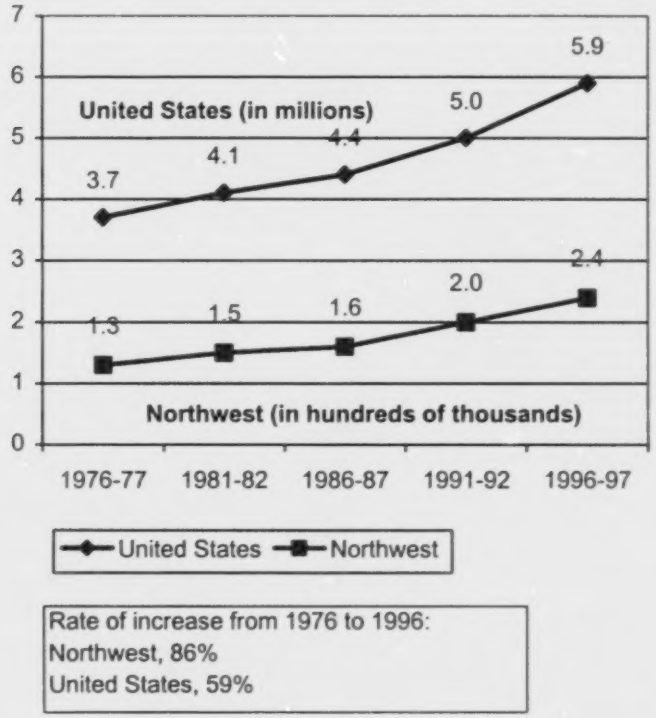


Sources: National Center for Education Statistics (1999a)

This changing racial, ethnic and language mix is bringing new challenges to schools to ensure that all students are provided adequate and equitable opportunities to learn. It affects how curriculum and instruction must be structured, and how effectively schools can communicate and work with families. It requires extra training for teachers in LEP instruction. It means extra training for all school personnel and the school board to understand and respect cultural differences and what these mean for teaching and learning.

More Students with Physical and Learning Disabilities. In addition to the increasing cultural and language differences found in many schools, more students are entering public schools with physical and learning disabilities. The number of children served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act has almost doubled since 1976 and now totals more than 10 percent of total regional enrollment (see Figure 1-5). These students require a much larger commitment of funds and resources.

Figure 1-5. Number of Children Served Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, in the Northwest Region and the United States, 1976 to 1996



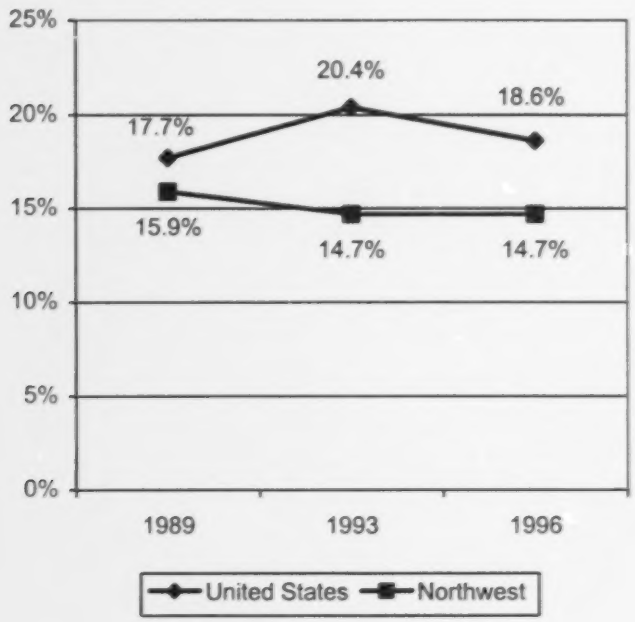
Source: National Center for Education Statistics (1998e)

Now that even severely disabled students are being mainstreamed, regular classroom teachers and support staff need additional training and classroom support in order to respond effectively to the learning needs of these students.

Persistent Poverty

Even with a robust economy, the percentage of school-age children living in poverty in the Northwest has remained stable since 1993 (see Figure 1-6).

Figure 1-6. Poverty Status of 5- to 17-year-olds in the Northwest Region and the United States, 1989 to 1996



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau (1998b)

Poverty is not evenly distributed throughout the region. Some districts have virtually no students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunches; in others, all students qualify. School data suggests that when there is high minority enrollment, there also is, in most cases, a high poverty rate.

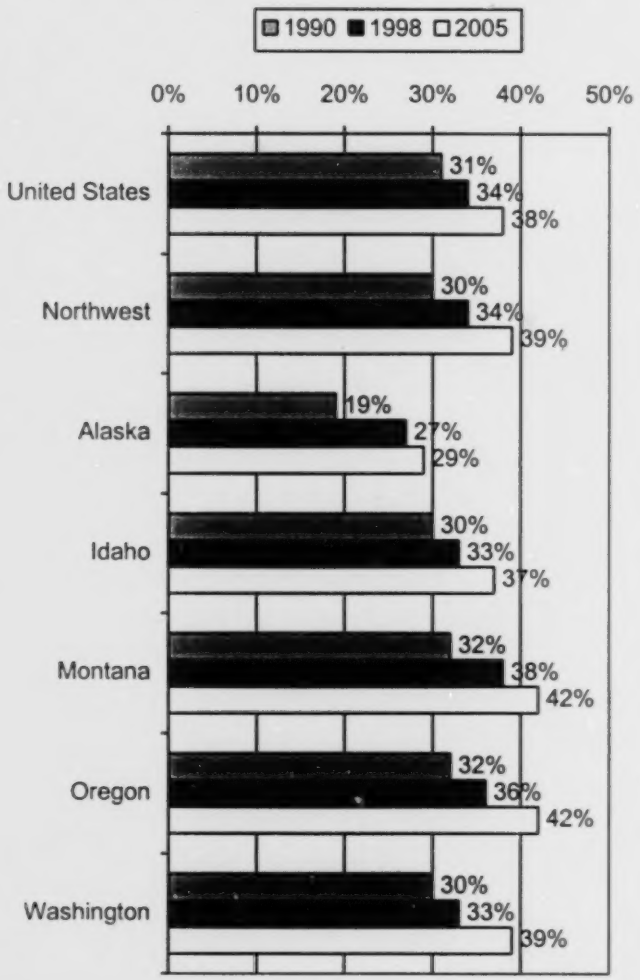
While poverty does not necessarily mean low student performance, numerous studies have demonstrated a definite inverse relationship between a school's poverty rate and student achievement. Schools with high poverty rates, as per these studies, face greater challenges in their efforts to effectively engage students in learning and to gain family support for children's work in schools, and follow up outside of school. These schools need access to additional family support services to ensure that children's basic needs are met so that they are ready to learn when they enter the classroom. School staff members need to be able to recognize students' needs for instructional support services, and they need to know how to access these services for their students. They also need to know how to connect families with financial, social, parenting, and educational supports, when necessary.

Tightening of Budgets

A Shrinking Constituency

The population is aging, and this has troubling ramifications for public education (see Figure 1-7). First, because a decreasing proportion of households has school-age children, schools are losing direct, child-centered connections with a larger percentage of the population. More than three out of five respondents to NWREL's public survey did not

Figure 1-7. Percent of Population 45 Years and Over in the Northwest Region of the United States, 1990 and 1998, with Projections for 2005



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau (1999a and 1999b)

have school-age children in the household. This loss of child-centered constituency means that schools have an increasingly difficult job garnering public support for levies and generating public involvement in schools. In addition, competition is growing between the needs of children and the needs of seniors for limited tax dollars to fund services.

Dwindling financial support for public education

For the most part, it appears that Northwest schools have, at best, modest public support for funding. Three of the five NWREL states, Alaska, Montana, and Oregon, showed decreasing per-pupil expenditures (constant-dollar-adjusted) between 1990 and 1995. Washington showed a slight increase during this same period. Idaho showed a substantial increase, but the average per-pupil expenditure in that state in 1991 started well below the average for all other NWREL states, and by 1995, was still well below the 1995 regional and national averages (see Figure 1-8).

Figure 1-8. Current Expenditure Per Pupil in Fall Enrollment in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, by State, 1990-91 to 1995-96 (in constant 1995-96 dollars)

Source: National Center for Education Statistics (1998d)

Moving to Standards-Based Instruction in the Northwest

All five NWREL states have either adopted standards for student performance, or are in the process of developing standards for adoption. Language arts (reading and/or writing) and math will be included as benchmark subjects in all five states. Other subjects are included as well, depending on the state. Required assessments of student progress toward meeting standards varies by state, but will be conducted in at least three grade levels for students in each state (see Table 1-1).

Table 1-1. Student Performance Benchmark Levels and Subjects by State, October 1999

	Levels	Subjects
Alaska	3, 6, 8, exit	Reading, Writing, Math
Idaho	K-6, 7-8, 9-12	Language Arts, Math *Science, Social Studies, Health*
Montana	4, 8, exit	Reading, Math *Others in development*
Oregon	3, 5, 8, 10, 12	Read, Writing, Math *Science, Social Science, the Arts, Foreign Languages*
Washington	4, 7, 10	Reading, Writing, Math *Communications, Science, Social Studies, the Arts, Health and Fitness*

Two states, Oregon and Washington, are currently administering basic skills assessments for reading, writing, and mathematics that are aligned to standards. They will continue to phase in assessments for more subjects and grade levels. Alaska will begin administering aligned assessments in 2000. Idaho and Montana are developing assessments that are aligned to standards, but with no set timeline for implementation (see Table 1-2).

Table 1-2. Status of Student Performance Standards in the Northwest Region, October 1999

	Benchmark Adoption Year	Timeframe for Aligned Assessments	Starting Class for Exiting Standards*
Alaska	1999	Spring 2000	Class of 2002
Idaho	1999 (partial)	In development	Class of 2004
Montana	1998 (partial)	In development	None set
Oregon	1996	Phased 1997 to 2006	Class of 2001
Washington	1995 and 1996	Phased 1997 to 2008	Class of 2008

* The "Starting Class for Exiting Standards" indicates the first year that graduating students must meet secondary level benchmarks in order to graduate with a regular diploma in Alaska, Idaho, and Washington, or with an additional credential (the Certificate of Initial Mastery) in Oregon.

Summary

All five Northwest states have established student performance standards or are in the process of doing so. Timetables for implementation have been established for most states. Most districts have been working diligently to revise their instructional programs to align with state standards, in most cases with little, if any, additional funding.

In summary, in attempts to address emerging issues, the Northwest's schools are caught in a dilemma. They must respond to the learning needs of an increasingly diverse and needy student population, while at the same time aligning their instructional programs to a set of performance standards that, in effect, encourage uniformity in curriculum materials and instructional practices. The results of the educator survey, which follow, reflect these trends. It is encouraging that in spite of the need for change, with little or no additional funding support, many educators are embracing the concept of standards-based instruction, are striving to align their instructional programs with standards, and are seeking out strategies and support to ensure that *all* students have an opportunity to achieve to these high standards. NWREL can be instrumental in helping school staff achieve their goals by identifying, developing, and disseminating cost efficient and effective promising practices and strategies that address these school improvement needs.

REGIONAL NEEDS FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT: FINDINGS FROM THE EDUCATOR AND PUBLIC SURVEYS

Now more than ever the focus of Northwest educators is on teaching and learning. When asked to select from a list of 56 issues those three that were of the highest priority to the success of their work over the next few years, educators most often chose issues related directly to teaching and learning.

When asked what types of research and development assistance they needed for these issues, they said they were particularly interested in promising practices, models, and training that support teaching and learning in a standards-based environment.

The Highest Priority Issues

Sixteen survey issues selected by respondents as their top three met the test of statistical significance, thereby making the list of high priority research and development issues for the Northwest (see Table 2-1). These sixteen issues fell into four broad categories of research and development needs:

1. Developing a standards-based instructional program
2. Creating a supportive and challenging learning environment
3. Engaging all students in learning
4. Ensuring support for the instructional program

Clearly, teaching and learning in a standards-based environment defines the nature of Northwest educators' research and development needs.

Table 2-1. Priority Issues for Educators

A. Developing a standards-based instructional program

- Aligning standards, assessment, instruction and teacher development
- Applying developmentally appropriate instruction in a standards-based environment
- Developing classroom assessments that demonstrate performance
- Integrating curriculum across subjects

B. Engaging all students in learning

- Finding effective strategies for students who are not succeeding
- Actively engaging all students in learning
- Fostering student responsibility for their own learning
- Fostering positive student behavior, attitude, and motivation

C. Creating a supportive and challenging learning environment

- Creating a learning environment that is safe, supportive, productive
- Strengthening partnerships between families and schools
- Strengthening community understanding/support for public education
- Preparing teachers to help students meet performance standards

D. Ensuring support for the instructional program

- Assuring sufficient school funding
- Recruiting and retaining qualified personnel
- Allocating adequate time to develop/implement school improvements
- Using available technology to support learning

N=1733

The Types of Research and Development Assistance Educators Say Would Be Most Helpful for Addressing Priority Needs

For each of their priority issues, survey respondents were asked to indicate which types of research and development assistance would be most helpful to them. While each of eight types of assistance was selected by at least one out of 10 respondents, three types of assistance, including promising practices, models or solutions and training, predominate across the issues (see Table 2-2). In fact, promising practices, models or solutions, and training were selected by more than one out of two respondents.

Table 2-2. Research and Assistance Types Educators Said Would Be Most Helpful

1. Selected by more than half of respondents:
   - Describe promising practices (59%)
   - Develop models or solutions (52%)
   - Provide training (51%)

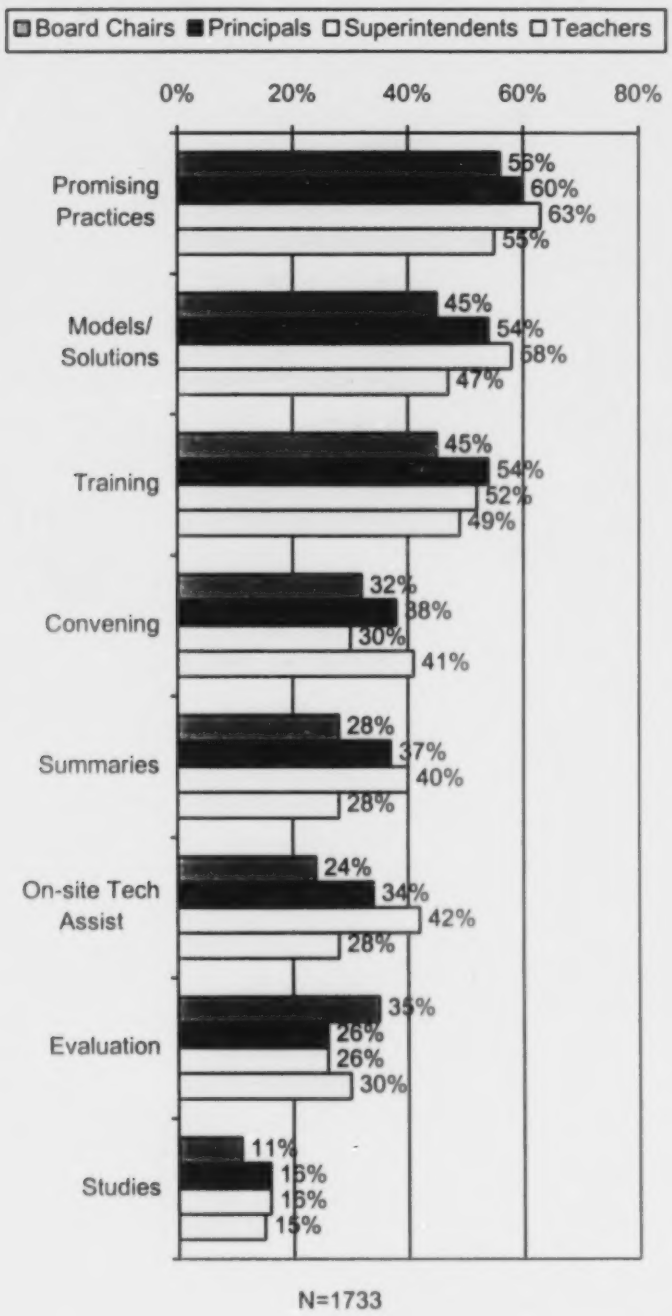
2. Selected by less than half:
   - Convene - bring educators together (37%)
   - Develop summaries of existing research (34%)
   - Provide on-site technical assistance (33%)
   - Evaluate your school's efforts (28%)
   - Conduct studies (15%)

Clearly, educators prefer not to expend their limited time reinventing the wheel, but, instead, would like assistance in identifying models that already demonstrate success in the field. Along with this, they want training in applying these models to their work. Superintendents and principals were especially interested in promising practices, models and training (see Figure 2-1). They were also the ones most interested in summaries of existing research and on-site technical assistance.

Although not as highly ranked as promising practices, models and training, other types of assistance are of interest to educators as well. At least one out of three teachers and principals said convening, or bringing educators together to share their expertise, experience, and support, was their preferred type of research and development assistance. Evaluation was of most interest to school board chairs and teachers. All four role groups show relatively little interest in assistance with original research studies.

In the following section each of the sixteen high priority issues will be discussed in detail, and specific needs for research and development assistance and professional development will be identified. Findings from the public survey will be included, where relevant.

Figure 2-1. Preferred Assistance Types for the Top Sixteen Issues by Educator Role Group



A Look at the Issues, Part I
Developing a Standards-based Instructional Program

As reflected in three of the four issues in this category of research and development need, standards-based instruction has clearly moved to the top of the list for educators (see Table 2-3). In addition, based on the experiences of a number of respondents, this appears to be a move in the right direction. Survey respondents were asked what, during the past year, was the single most important factor contributing to positive student performance. Having a committed, quality staff ranked first, followed by the creation of a safe, supportive, and productive learning environment. Standards and alignment came next.

Table 2-3. Developing a Standards-based Instructional Program

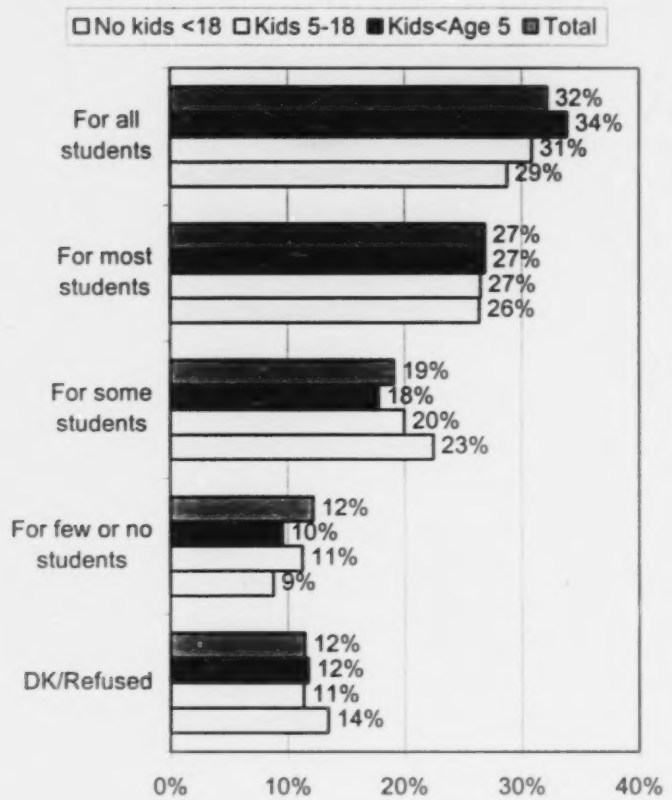
	Issues	Percent Rating 3 or 4*
1.	Aligning standards, assessment, instruction, and teacher development	90%
2.	Applying developmentally appropriate instruction in a standards-based environment	82 %
3.	Developing classroom assessments that demonstrate performance	87%
4.	Integrating curriculum across subjects	75%
	N =	1733

* 3 = important; 4 = very important to the success of educator's work in their schools/districts

This focus on standard-based instruction has, for the most part, been in response to state reform efforts. All five NWREL states have worked toward establishing performance standards for all students. The states are in various stages of implementing these standards.

Public awareness of these state education standards varies across the region. Slightly over half (55 percent) of all public survey respondents had heard about higher performance standards being set for students in their states. Three out of five respondents with school-age children were aware of state standards. Awareness was highest in the states furthest along in implementing standards: Alaska, Oregon, and Washington. Of those who were aware of state standards, only one out of three thought they were appropriate for all students (see Figure 2-2). There were no statistically significant differences in responses for those who had school-age children versus those who did not.

Figure 2-2. Would You Say That the New Performance Standards Are Appropriate for All Students? (Percent who said, yes)



Source: 1999 NRWEL Public Survey

N=2003

Although states have taken the lead in establishing performance standards, the public feels that the primary responsibility for setting standards for their own schools should be a local responsibility. When asked who should be responsible for setting local school standards for learning, public survey respondents point to parents, community members, and local school staff as those who should be the most responsible for deciding what students must learn. Seven in 10 claim these groups should have "a lot" of responsibility for deciding what students must learn. More than one in ten, however, are also open to some input from state officials and business and labor leaders (see Table 2-4).

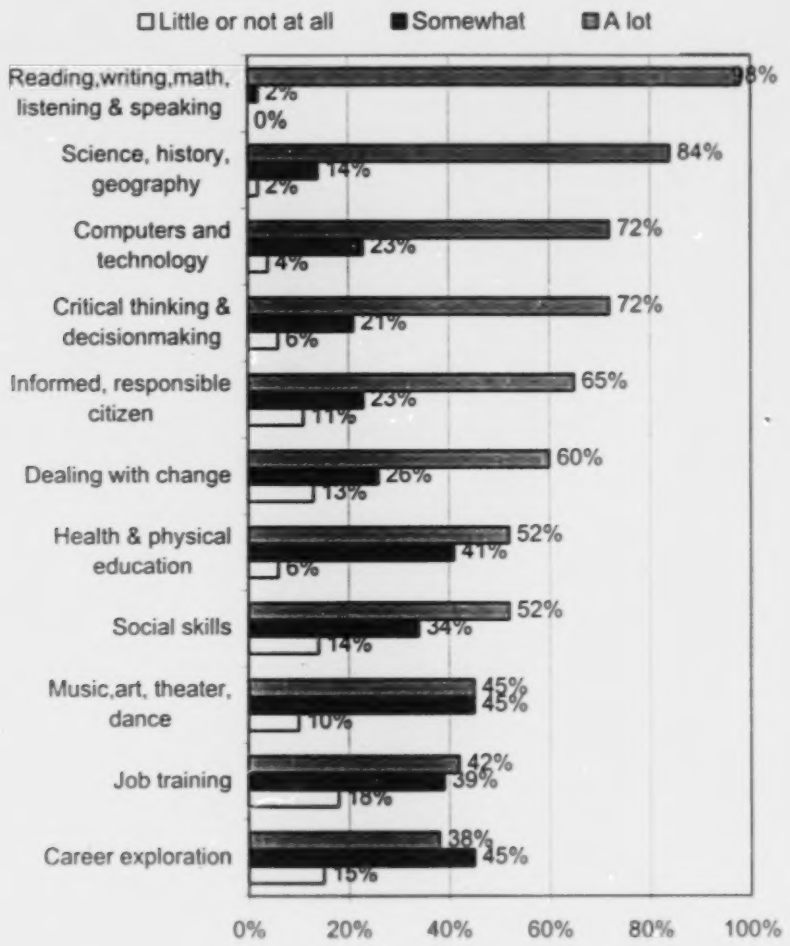
Table 2-4. Who Should Have Responsibility for Deciding What Students Must Learn?

	A lot	Moderate level	None
Parents & Community	69%	29%	1%
School staff	68	29	2
National education experts	35	44	20
State officials	21	54	24
Federal officials	13	42	43
Business/labor leaders	12	58	28

Data source: 1999 NWREL Public Survey N=2003

What does the public think students should learn in school? When asked which subjects local schools should emphasize, public survey respondents gave highest priority to basic skills, such as reading, writing, math, speaking, and listening. However, they felt other subjects should also be emphasized (see Figure 2-3). More than seven out of 10 said science, history, geography, and technology should be high on the list. Fewer, but still a majority, said learning responsible citizenship, dealing with change, health and physical education, and social skills should be an important part of the learning experience. At least two out of five included arts and job training. Clearly, the public wants students to receive a well-rounded education at their local schools.

Figure 2-3. What Subjects Should Be Emphasized in the Public Schools?



Source: 1999 NWREL Public Survey N=2003

Specific Issues in Developing a Standards-based Instructional Program

1. Aligning standards, assessment, instruction and professional development for teachers

This issue was rated "important" or "very important" to educators' work in their schools by nine out of 10 survey respondents. It was by far the leading issue in the region when survey respondents were asked to pick the top three issues that affected their work. It was the highest or second highest ranked issue for all educator role groups and school levels. Superintendents and principals were twice as likely to select this issue as teachers and school board members. Educators from high minority schools were more likely to select this issue than those from low minority schools.

Many respondents seem to feel that state standards have provided a helpful framework for organizing and focusing their school's instructional programs. However, it is also clear that many feel overwhelmed by the extra work required to make such a substantial shift in their instructional practices. They say that they need more time and support for individual and team planning to align their instructional program with standards.

R&D assistance and professional development needs. Administrators were the ones most likely to mention alignment when asked what their school's most important professional development needs were. This was not surprising, for in their roles as instructional supervisors they have the responsibility for ensuring that alignment within and across school levels is achieved. The write-in responses to the professional development question suggest that many are not taking a very comprehensive approach toward alignment, however. Most said professional development was needed for aligning curriculum, *or* instruction, *or* assessment with standards, rather than saying aligning all three with standards.

Of those who had marked the alignment issue as one of their top three priorities, half said that their primary research and development assistance needs for this issue were promising practices, models, or training. One out of three chose on-site technical assistance or bringing educators together to share ideas and experience.

2. Applying developmentally appropriate instruction in a standards-based environment

This issue was rated "important" or "very important" to educators' work in their schools by four out of five survey respondents. Educators from high-minority schools were more likely to select it as one of their top three issues than those from low-minority schools.

R&D assistance and professional development needs. Educators are searching for models of practices that enable students to achieve state standards through a developmentally appropriate approach. They are looking for ways to provide multiple and diverse opportunities for learning to ensure that all students progress toward meeting standards. In response to the survey question about type of research and development assistance for this issue, promising practices, models, and training were the top choices.

3. Developing classroom assessments that demonstrate student performance

This issue was rated "important" or "very important" to educators' work in their schools by almost nine out of 10 survey respondents. Administrators were almost twice as likely as teaching staff to chose this issue as one of their top three issues, and respondents in schools outside the metropolitan areas chose it more frequently than those inside.

Performance-based assessment is an important element in the standards-based approach to education that Northwest states are mandating, and it requires a significant change in the way most teachers, schools, and state departments of education have traditionally approached student assessment.

Several survey respondents said that students benefited when their schools adopted a performance-based instructional program. As one respondent said, "The state and district emphasis on performance-based assessment has had a very important impact on student performance."

One out of 10 respondents mentioned assessment as a professional development need. However, surprisingly few professional development write-in responses specifically addressed the issue of performance assessments. Only one out of five respondents who said assessment was a professional development need mentioned state performance standards, portfolios, authentic assessment, or alternative assessments.

The appropriateness of state performance standards for *all* students was another assessment issue for which the lack of write-in comments on the educators' survey was surprising. The majority of public survey respondents thought that state standards are not appropriate to all students. The question of how schools deal with students who are unable to meet performance standards did not show up in educators' write-in responses.

R&D assistance and professional development needs. Survey respondents indicated that promising practices, models, and training would be the most useful types of technical assistance to help them develop classroom assessments that will demonstrate performance. Promising practices were especially desired. Two out of three respondents selected this as a preferred type of assistance.

In their responses concerning professional development needs, respondents generally did not indicate the type of assessment for which they wanted training. Of the ones who were

interested in performance assessment, on-going training for developing an efficient tracking system for student performance including scoring guides, state tests, collection of evidence, and running records, was mentioned.

Having insufficient time to evaluate, implement, and analyze the results from assessments was an issue that came up in a number of assessment write-ins. Many thought that required assessments were taking too much time away from instruction. They did not think that the potential benefits these assessments had for informing instruction offset the costs to students from the loss in instructional time.

4. Integrating curriculum across subjects

This issue was rated "important" or "very important" to educators' work in their schools by three out of four survey respondents. There was no significant difference among educator role groups on the relative importance of this issue. The issue made up more than one out of four curriculum-related professional development needs listed by respondents.

R&D assistance and professional development needs. Promising practices and training were selected by three out of five respondents as the most helpful form of research and development assistance for this issue. Research summaries and models were selected by two out of five. Respondents were especially interested in learning how to integrate reading, writing, math, and technology as core subjects throughout the content areas so as to provide ample opportunity for students to fully develop these skills.

A Look at the Issues, Part II
Engaging All Students in Learning

It has always been a challenge for teachers to find ways to engage *all* students in learning, but the magnitude of this challenge is growing and taking on new dimensions as the student population becomes increasingly diverse. Add to this the increased efforts to keep students from dropping out, students who are apathetic about learning or whose lives are so chaotic that schoolwork becomes secondary to survival. Add, too, the diminished community involvement in and support for schools, and the unrelenting media criticism of public education. The result is an uninspiring message to students about the value society places on them and their work in school. Engaging young minds that have tuned out to school require instructional strategies and institutional structures and supports beyond those needed for the "typical" student.

The survey data speak loudly to the concerns of educators about engaging kids who have tuned out to school. The fact that four out of the 16 highest priority issues were directly related to the challenge of engaging students in learning, suggests that these issues cannot be ignored. There is a clear cry for help here (see Table 2-5).

Table 2-5. Engaging *All* Students in Learning

		Percent Rating 3 or 4*
1.	Finding effective strategies for students who are not succeeding	92%
2.	Actively engaging all students in learning	96%
3.	Fostering student responsibility for their own learning	95%
4.	Fostering positive student behavior, attitude, and motivation	97%

* 3 = important; 4 = very important to the success of educator's work in their schools/districts

N=1733

Specific Issues in Engaging *All* Students in Learning

1. Finding effective strategies for students who are not succeeding

Nine out of 10 survey respondents said this issue was "important" or "very important" to their work. Principals and middle school educators were the ones most likely to rank this as one of their top three issues. It was an issue that came up frequently in response to the question about professional development needs, especially for educators in large districts (enrollment greater than 7,500) and those in middle schools.

R&D assistance and professional development needs. Again, promising practices, models, and training were the preferred type of research and development assistance that educators said would be most helpful. When asked about professional development needs for those working with at-risk students, one response captured the essence of all others: "[We] need to learn to recognize them, counsel them appropriately, match them with education alternatives appropriate to their learning styles, and provide/use alternative instructional styles."

2. Actively engaging all students in learning

Almost all survey respondents said this issue was "important" or "very important" to their work. This ranked fourth in the list of issues which educators selected as their top three concerns. All four-role groups ranked this as a high-priority issue. Middle and high school educators were more likely than elementary educators to choose this as one of their high priority issues.

The responses to the question on professional development needs suggest that there is no consensus among educators as to what causes kids to lose interest in their schoolwork, and therefore there were mixed opinions on what it would take to get them to reconnect. According to the survey, actively engaging all students in learning is a problem faced by all educators. Some regard the lack of engagement as a failure of the student, yet another aspect of the "I don't give a damn" attitude of the unmotivated student. Others see it as a family problem, and wrote comments about the need for programs to motivate students who are not supported at home. Still others see it as a teacher problem, and believe the solution lies in changing teaching practices to get students excited about learning.

3. Fostering student responsibility for their own learning

More than nine out of 10 survey respondents said this issue was "important" or "very important" to their work. Teachers were more likely than respondents in other role groups to select this as a top three issue.

4. Fostering positive student behavior, attitude and motivation

Almost all survey respondents said this issue was "important" or "very important" to their work. Teachers were almost twice as likely as other educator groups to select this as one of their three priority issues.

R&D assistance and professional development needs. Students do need to take responsibility for their own learning, and most do. However, some segment of the student population just does not connect with what's going on in the classroom. These students can frustrate a teacher's best intentions.

Based on responses to the question about professional development needs, some respondents felt that their instructional practices may not be appropriate to all students. The research on brain-based learning and learning styles has captured their interest. They want to learn how to apply these and other research-based practices to their classroom instruction so they can address the learning needs of each of their students.

Some educators suggest the problem lies with their curriculum. They want to know how "to relate the curriculum to the real world, to create meaningful work and learning experiences for students."

Some, knowing that the school and classroom climate can enhance or detract from learning, are looking for classroom management strategies that increase personal responsibility in students, reduce fear, and support learning.

Finally, some also recognize that the home life of students affects their motivation and readiness to learn. They are looking for strategies to support families, to engage parents in their children's learning, and to strengthen parenting skills.

A Look at the Issues, Part III
Creating a Supportive and Challenging Learning Environment

While the main locus of control for educators is what occurs in the classroom, what happens in a child's life outside the classroom cannot be ignored. Learning is either supported or thwarted by all that goes on in a child's world. Schools must be prepared to support and enhance both the inside *and* the outside experiences that can contribute to a child's learning success. Four of the 16 survey issues that educators selected as highest priority speak to this issue (see Table 2-6).

Table 2-6. Creating a Supportive and Challenging Learning Environment

		Percent Rating 3 or 4*
1.	Creating a learning environment that is safe, supportive, productive	94%
2.	Strengthening partnerships between families and schools	89%
3.	Strengthening community understanding/support for public education	91%
4.	Preparing teachers to help students meet performance standards	91%

* 3 = important; 4 = very important to the success of educator's work in their schools/districts N=1733

Specific Issues in Creating a Supportive and Challenging Learning Environment

1. Creating a learning environment that is safe, supportive, productive

More than nine out of 10 survey respondents said this issue was "important" or "very important" to their work. It was a high-ranking issue for each of the four educator groups.

When survey respondents were asked what was the single most important factor contributing to positive student performance in their school or district over the past two years, a relatively large number talked about the school environment. This factor was second only to having a committed, quality staff.

The types of things that those educators mentioned in relation to creating healthy school and classroom environments were such things as:

- "Implementing a school-wide discipline policy, developed by staff, that has set the tone for a positive climate built on respect, responsibility, and resilience."
- "A low threat, high challenge environment."
- "Teachers taking a sincere interest in each student."
- "Lots of positive student/teacher interaction."

A school structure factor that was frequently mentioned as the most important factor contributing to positive student performance was "small" or "reduced" class size.

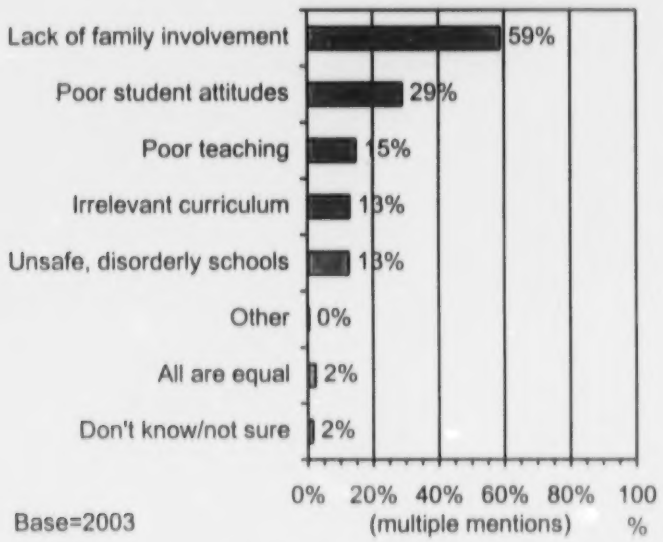
R&D assistance and professional development needs. Almost three out of five educators said that promising practices would be the most useful type of assistance for helping schools create environments that support learning. Two out of five wanted training and models. Respondents said that training is needed on developing effective classroom management practices, establishing clear expectations for behavior, developing school-wide discipline policies, violence prevention programs, including conflict resolution, and training on how to develop a climate of respect among students, teachers, and family members.

2. Strengthening partnerships between families and schools

Almost nine out of 10 survey respondents said this issue was "important" or "very important" to their work. All four role groups ranked this issue high in their priorities. When ask what single factor contributed most to positive student performance, many survey respondents replied that continued family involvement was the single most important factor in contributing to positive student performance in their schools. They said parents can provide resources and support for their children, and can help motivate them to take responsibility for their own learning and behavior.

The issue of school/family partnerships has been one of growing interest over the past two survey years. It is an issue that is getting increasingly complex as the diversity of families grows, and more non-English speaking families settle in the Northwest. Developing effective school/family partnerships can be a time-consuming challenge, especially when educators or families lack efficient tools, such as telephones, e-mail, or a common language, for communication. Work schedules further limit opportunities to communicate. But families, the public believes, are the most important players in determining student success in schools. When asked what interfered *most* with students trying to do their best, three out of five public survey respondents said "lack of family involvement" (see Figure 2-4).

Figure 2-4. Which of the Following Do You Think Interferes *Most* with Students Trying To Do Their Best in School?



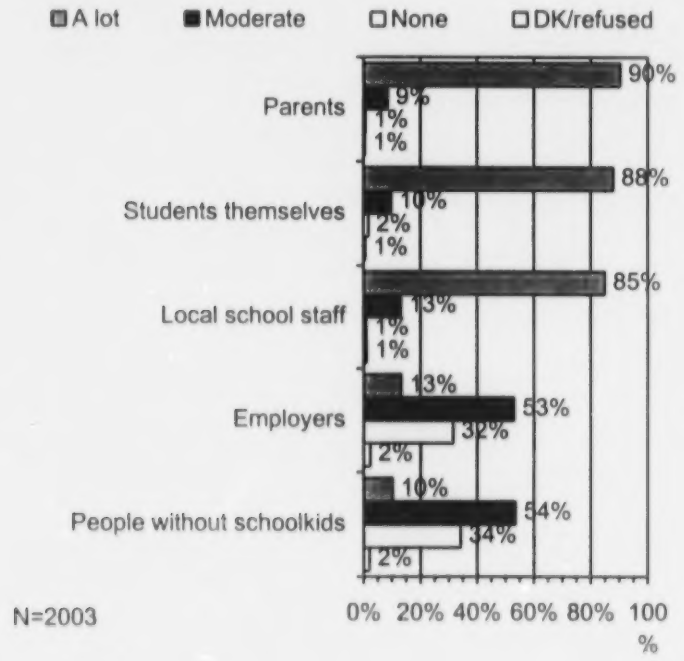
*In some cases, more than one item was chosen.
Data source: 1999 NWREL Public Survey

The public believes, also, that families have the greatest responsibility for ensuring that students achieve high standards. When asked how much responsibility parents, students, teachers, employers, or community members without school-age children should have for making sure that students achieve high standards, respondents point to parents first (see Figure 2-5). It is clear that both the region's public and its educators believe that building strong school/family partnerships *has* to be an important focus of schools.

But, are families currently involved with their schools? The findings from the public survey show that the large majority of parents are involved at some level. For example, 86 percent of respondents with school-age children said they had visited their local schools at least once in the past year (see Figure 2-6).

The majority had participated in some activity specifically involving their own child: a parent/teacher conference (75 percent), an arts production (65 percent), or a sports event (54 percent). Fewer families had participated in activities that materially support the overall school program such as fundraisers (53 percent), volunteer work (39 percent), and PTA or booster clubs (31 percent). A smaller proportion had participated in policy-related activities, by attending school advisory/site councils meetings (22 percent) or school board meetings (14 percent). One out of five had attended an evening or weekend class at

Figure 2-5. How Much Responsibility Should Each of the Following People Have for Making Sure That Students Achieve to High Standards?



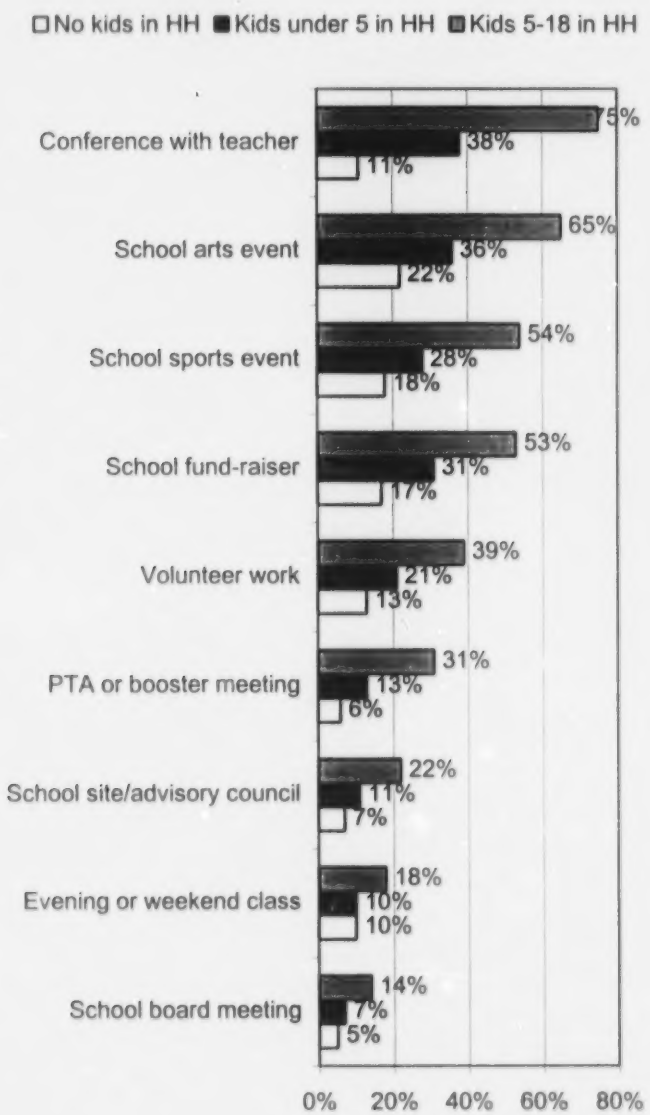
their schools. Families with less that $20,000 in household income were less likely to participate in school events, except to attend a parent/teacher conference. They were at least as likely to do this as families that are more affluent (see Figure 2-7).

When asked, "Would you like to be more involved in school decision-making?" 57 percent of public survey respondents with school-age children said yes. Respondents from low-income families were just as likely as those from more affluent families to want to be more involved. The same held true for minority and non-minority respondents with school-age children. Most families want to be more involved with schools in a meaningful way. The question is how can schools make this happen more often.

R&D assistance and professional development needs. Although educators ranked school/family partnerships high in their list of priority issues, professional development needs related to this issue came up surprisingly infrequently in response to the question "What are the greatest professional development needs for your school?" For those who did mention school/family partnerships, access issues, especially time, were a factor in a third of the responses. The need to develop strategies to engage families made up the balance. Several said they needed professional development in dealing with dysfunctional families and in enhancing the parenting skills in families. Two out of three respondents

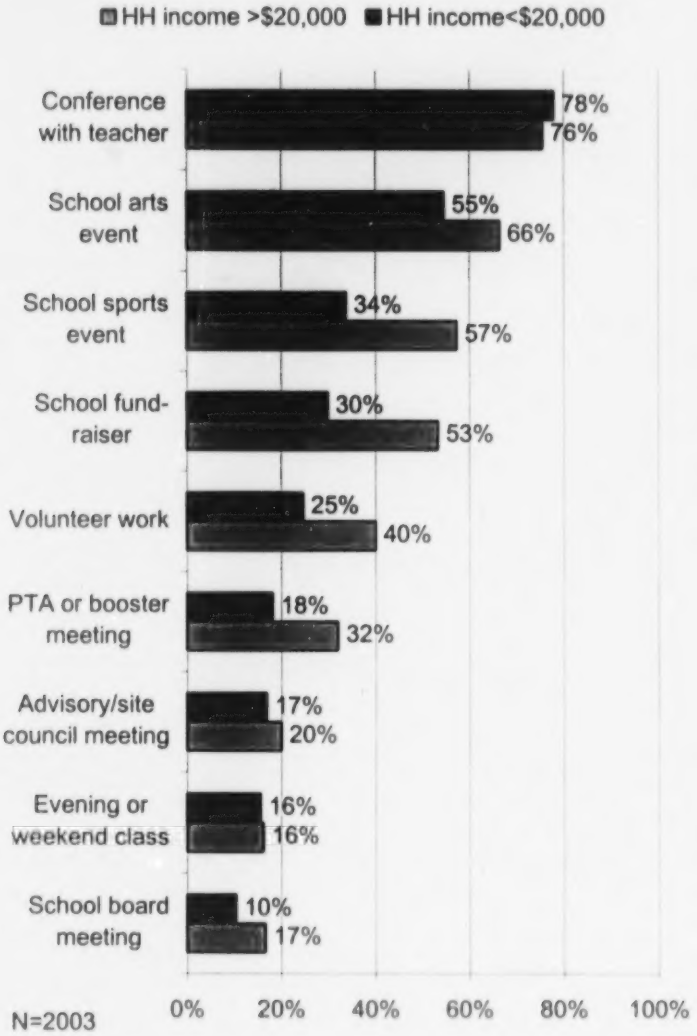
listed promising practices as their greatest preference for research and development assistance for this issue. Models and training were second and third.

Figure 2-6. Which of the Following Activities Have You Participated in at a Public School in the Past Year?



Data source: 1999 NWREL Public Survey N=2003

Figure 2-7. Which Activities Have Respondents with School-aged Children Participated in the Past Year (by Household Income)



3. Strengthening community understanding/support for public education

Nine out of ten survey respondents said this issue was "important" or "very important" to their work. This was an issue of special importance to school board chairs, who selected it at a rate approximately twice that of the other three role groups as one of their top three issues.

This high selection rate by school board chairs is not surprising in that school boards are at the center of public education policy and funding decisions. They must build public support and trust in local schools in order to gain voter approval for levies. Changing demographics are making this more difficult. The population is aging. Fewer and fewer households have school-age children. Consequently, an increasing portion of the public is less directly connected to their local school communities. Participation in school events drops off precipitously when households do not have school age or younger children (see Table 2-7).

Table 2-7. Have You Yourself Visited a Public School (Kindergarten through High School) in the Past Year (not including using the site for election voting)?

	Have visited a school in past year
Have school age children	86%
Have children under age 5	55
No children in the household	32

Data source: 1999 NWREL Public Survey N=2003

This continuing loss of direct, child-based connections with local schools means that schools must work harder to win public support and to gain access to the wealth of expertise, experience, and financial resources that communities, including the business community, can provide.

Although two out of three public survey respondents said they did not have school-age children, some were still actively involved with their local schools, serving in a support capacity, as volunteers (15 percent), at fundraising events (20 percent), and at PTA and booster club meetings (8 percent). Some participate at the policy level by attending school advisory or council meetings (8 percent) or school board meetings (5 percent).

Although they do not show a high rate of active involvement in their local schools, many survey respondents did seem to understand the important role that schools can serve in supporting families, beyond educating children. In fact, given a list of family support services that could be offered on-site at schools, people without children in school were

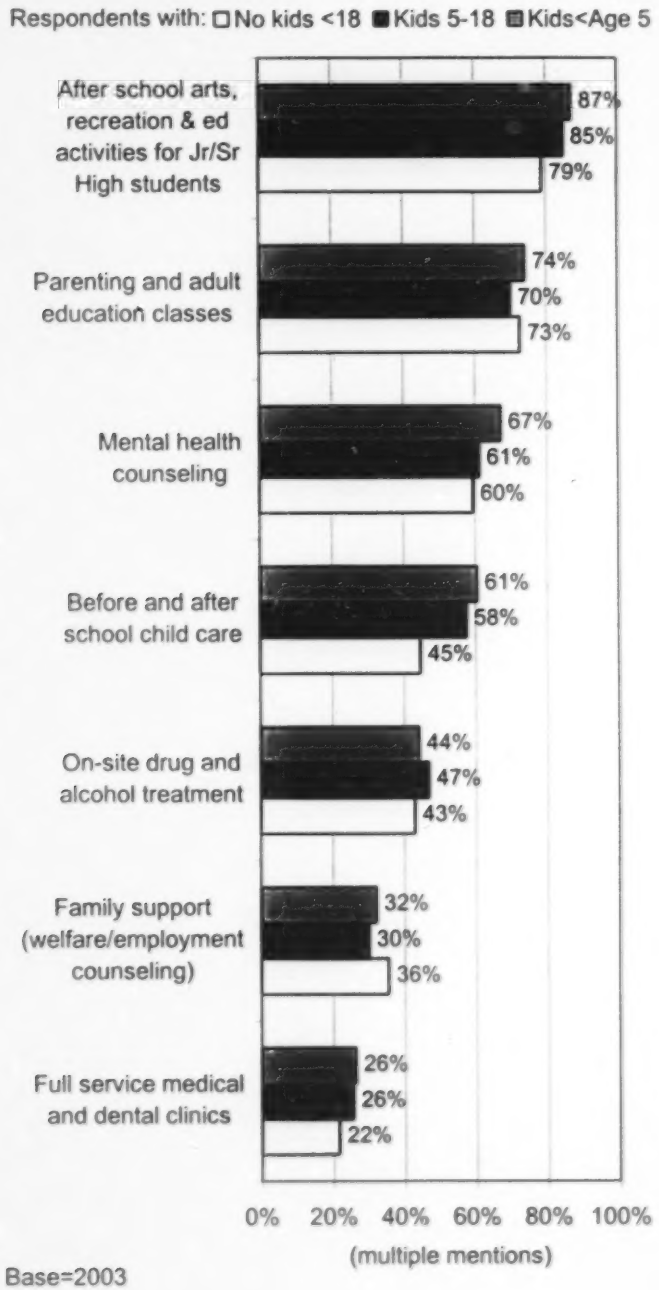
as likely to agree that these services should be provided, as were families with school-age children (see Figure 2-8). While there are differences in response rates that are statistically significant among the groups in this chart for some of these services, the differences generally are not large. The largest difference shows up in the case of before- and after-school childcare. People without children are less likely to agree that this is a necessary and important role for schools. Respondents with children under age five are those most likely to support before- and after- school child care, as well as many of the other services listed in this figure. The data in this figure suggest that families with very young children feel comfortable with the concept of local schools serving as a hub for the community's family support system.

The survey also shows that respondents from households with less than $20,000 annual income, even those without children in the household, support the use of schools as a center for family support services.

Based on the experiences of at least five respondents to the educator survey, using schools as a center for family support services works to the benefit of student learning. These respondents said that the single most important factor that contributed to positive student performance was providing access to a broad range of family support services at their schools. These were respondents from schools with poverty rates (based on free lunch eligibility) of 19 percent to 51 percent, skewed toward the high end.

R&D assistance and professional development needs. Educators said that promising practices for building community understanding and support would be the most useful type of research and development assistance for their schools. They provided little additional information on the specific topics of interest for professional development related to this issue.

Figure 2-8. Increasingly Community and Social Service Organizations and Schools Are Working Together to Serve Children and Families. Which Services Should Be Provided at Schools?



4. Preparing teachers to help students meet performance standards

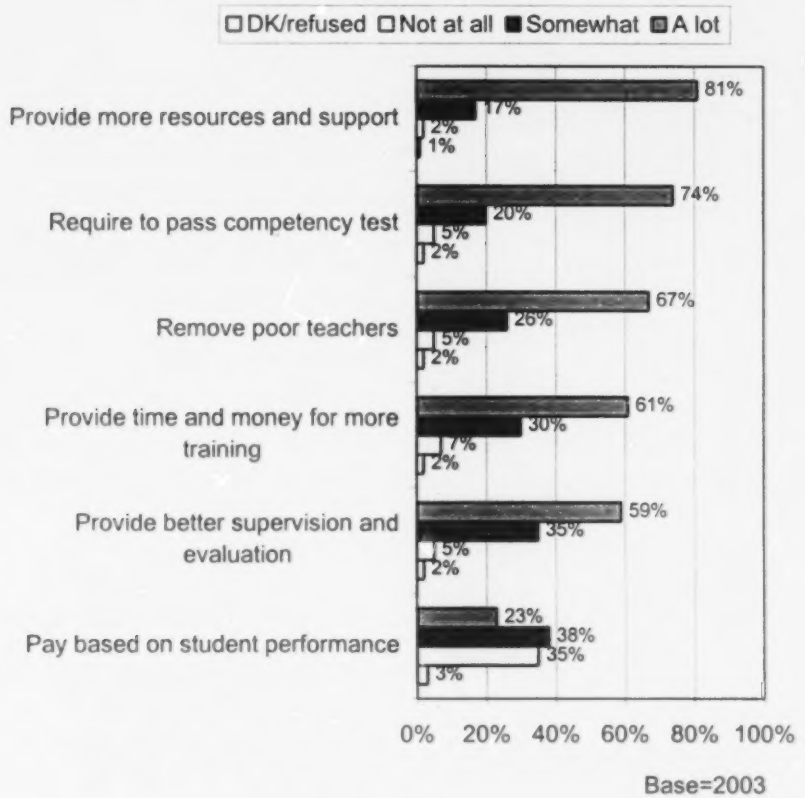
Nine out of 10 survey respondents said this issue was "important" or "very important" to their work. There was no statistically significant difference between role groups on this issue. It was important to all.

Mandating new standards, curriculum, and assessment models without adequately preparing teachers to use them is setting a school up for less than optimal results. Given the number of survey respondents who said their schools need professional development to align their instructional programs with standards, and the number who said they need more time for collaborating with colleagues on their instructional programs, it appears that there are many educators who feel their schools are not yet adequately prepared to teach to the new standards that states are mandating. This situation is reflected in slipping deadlines for assessments and exit standards in three Northwestern states.

The public is sympathetic with teachers who say they need more resources to deliver quality education. When asked which of the things listed below in Figure 2-9 would help to improve the quality of teaching, 81 percent said that more resources and support for teachers in the classroom, and 61 percent felt that more time and money for teacher training would do a lot to improve the quality of teaching. However, at least two out of three also said that evaluating teacher competence and removing those that just don't make the grade would also do a lot to improve the quality of teaching in schools. Respondents did not consider pay based on performance a particularly effective means for improving instruction.

R&D assistance and professional development needs. Training would be the most useful type of research and development assistance for this issue, said four out of five educators. Training is needed in several areas: aligning curriculum, instruction and assessment with standards; developing alternative assessments and developing efficient systems to track student progress; and developing strategies for generating public support for more teacher collaboration time to plan and coordinate the instructional program and to learn from each other.

Figure 2-9. In Your Opinion, How Much Would the Following Help to Improve the Quality of Teaching?



A Look at the Issues, Part IV
Ensuring Support for the Instructional Program

Finding the money, expertise, time, and technology necessary to develop and support a quality standards-based educational program is a concern to the public and educators alike. Four issues related to resources made the list of 16 issues of highest importance to educators over the next couple of years (see Table 2-8).

Table 2-8. Ensuring Support for the Instructional Program

	Percent Rating 3 or 4*
1. Assuring sufficient school funding	94%
2. Recruiting and retaining qualified personnel	88%
3. Allocating adequate time to develop/implement school improvements	89%
4. Using available technology to support learning	83%

* 3 = important; 4 = very important to the success of educator's work in their schools/districts

N=1773

Specific Issues in Ensuring Support for the Instructional Program

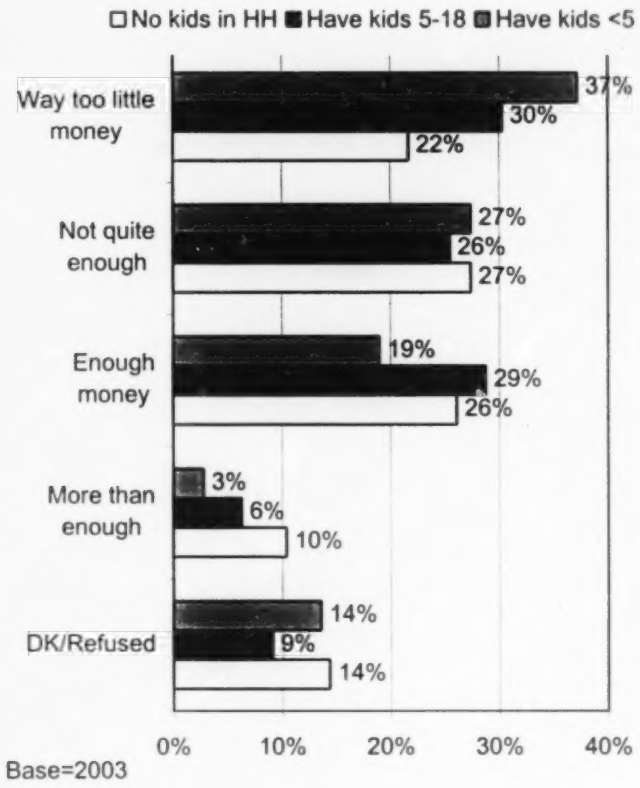
1. Assuring sufficient funding

More than nine out of 10 survey respondents said this issue was "important" or "very important" to their work. Funding was the top issues for board chairs and the second highest for the superintendents. Respondents from low-minority districts were more likely to select this issue than those from high-minority districts.

Based on the public survey response, school funding concerns the public as well. When asked if they believe that the schools receive enough money to educate *all* kids adequately, more than half of the respondents said they believe that local schools suffer from insufficient funding. Another 27 percent said that the funding is adequate. Only 8 percent of respondents thought that local schools currently receive more than enough funding to provide adequate education for all kids, and most of these were people with no children in the household.

People with school age and younger children were the most likely to say funding was very inadequate (see Figure 2-10). People over 45 years old were significantly more likely to say that schools have enough or more than enough money. Given the aging population, it appears that schools may have an increasingly difficult time convincing the voting public that spending more money for school levies should be a voting priority.

Figure 2-10. From What You Know or May Have Heard, Do You Believe That Schools in Your Area Receive Enough Money to Educate All Kids Adequately?



The amount of funding was not the only funding concern expressed by public survey respondents. More than half who voiced an opinion said that funding is not being distributed so that each school gets its fair share.

2. Recruiting and retaining qualified personnel

Almost nine out of 10 survey respondents said this issue was "important" or "very important" to their work. This issue was of greatest concern to board chairs, and secondary and middle school educators were more likely to select this issue than elementary educators.

When educators were asked what was the single most important factor that contributed to positive student performance in their schools, having a quality, committed staff came out

at the top of the list. Board members were the ones most likely to say this, with one out of three acknowledging quality staff as the driving force behind high student performance.

Schools in many parts of the Northwest are experiencing increased difficulty finding quality recruits to fill teaching and administrative vacancies. This problem is likely to get worse over the next decade. Given the current graduation rates from schools of education, as the bubble of baby boom teachers moves into retirement, the Northwest is likely to experience a substantial teacher and administrator shortage.

R&D assistance and professional development needs. Ensuring that teachers are prepared when they come into the pipeline is a good first step to ensuring a high-quality staff in schools. One board chair suggested that teacher preparation programs need to provide more hands-on experience for students preparing to enter the teaching profession. A principal stated that teacher education programs need to stay in touch with educators working in the field so they know what the needs are.

Finding qualified staff is not the end of the challenge. Keeping them and ensuring their ongoing development is just as important. Some respondents mentioned the need to provide mentoring for new teachers to ensure that they quickly become comfortable and productive in the classroom. Many respondents said teachers needed more time and increased opportunities for professional development, including opportunities to learn from one another through collaborative work and peer support.

Providing additional professional development opportunities will not solve all teacher and administrator quality problems, though. Three out of five respondents to the public survey said that providing better supervision and evaluation of teachers would do a lot to improve the quality of teaching. In addition, more than two out of three said that assessing teacher competency and removing poor teachers would improve the quality of teaching a lot. As one school board chair said, "Helping good teachers get better, and helping poorer ones get out" was their district's most important professional development need.

3. Allocating adequate time to develop expertise in and implement school improvements

More than nine out of 10 survey respondents said this issue was "important" or "very important" to their work. Teachers and principals were more likely than other role groups to say finding adequate time to develop expertise in and implement school improvements was a problem.

When educators were asked what the most important professional development need for their school was, time was one of the biggest issues. Principals spoke most passionately to the issue of time, saying that educators need time for staff conversation and reflection, time to work as a team in planning, aligning, and integrating the instructional program,

and time to implement new practices and assess their effectiveness. Many said in order for it to be effective, professional development had to be an on-going effort, not just a few scattered days.

Comments about time often were in reference to preparing for state standards. As one principal said, "[We need] Time! We just can't continue to be asked to do more complex instruction without the time to plan, learn, and assess." Providing more time for professional development means spending more money. Getting more money from taxpayers requires convincing taxpayers of the importance of this professional development need. There is some hope here. Most public survey respondents seemed to recognize the importance of providing more opportunities for educator development. Three out of five said that providing time and money for additional teacher training would do a lot to improve the quality of teaching.

R&D assistance and professional development needs. Approximately half of all respondents said that promising practices and models would be the most useful type of professional development regarding the issue of time. Several administrators suggested that professional development in time management was needed. Models of schools and districts that have succeeded in building on-going professional development into their school's work schedule would be helpful.

4. Using available technology to support learning

Eight out of 10 survey respondents said this issue was "important" or "very important" to their work. When asked what the school's most important professional development need was, one out of four educators listed learning how to integrate technology with instruction. The public, too, believes it is important for students to learn how to use technology in their studies. Technology ranked third in a list of 11 subjects that public survey respondents said should be emphasized in schools.

While the access to technology and the quality of technology continues to improve in most public schools, many educators feel unprepared to use the technology they have available. In fact, learning to use technology with instruction was the most frequently listed professional development need for the region overall. The smaller the school district, the more likely this issue was listed as the most important need. Those teaching older students were more likely to list technology than those with younger students. Low-minority schools were more likely to list this need than those with higher minority enrollments. Board chairs and administrators were more likely to list technology as the most important professional development need than were teachers.

R&D assistance and professional development needs. Survey respondents said time for, and access to training on technology in instruction would be the most useful type of assistance. Two categories of technology training were desired: training on the technical

aspects of operating the equipment and how to integrate technology into the curriculum. Many regard technology as a core skill, like reading, writing, and math computation, that should be integrated across the entire curriculum.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SURVEY DESIGN AND DATA ANALYSIS

Survey Design and Sample Selection

The Regional Needs Assessment operates on a two-year cycle. This is the second year of the cycle, which is the survey year. Two surveys were administered to identify educational research and development needs in the region. The first, a survey for educators, was a written survey sent to 6,470 educators in the NWREL region, including all school board chairs and district superintendents, plus a random sample of 385 principals and 500 teachers from each of the five NWREL states. The second was a survey conducted with the telephone of 2,000 randomly sampled households, 400 in each NWREL state.

The overall return rate for the educator survey was 29.1 percent. Table A-1 shows the return rate broken down by state and by role group.

Table A-1. Return Rates for the 1999 NWREL Educator Survey

Role Group	Return Rate		State	Return Rate
Board Chairs	14.8%		Alaska	25.0%
Superintendents	36.1		Idaho	33.0
Principals	36.8		Montana	27.0
Teachers	25.8		Oregon	27.2
			Washington	32.8
Total Sent	6,470			
Total Returned	1,884	29.1 % Returned		

The return rate for the public survey was effectively 100 percent, since telephone interviewers keep calling from a list of randomly selected phone numbers throughout each state until they succeed in interviewing 400 households.

Data analysis

This year a different approach to analyzing the survey responses was chosen. In previous years, we analyzed the responses by the ratings respondents assigned from a rating of zero, "not at all important to the success of my work in my school/district," to four, "very important to the success of my work in my school/district." Given that many of the 56 issues are important to most educators, the ratings tend to bunch at the top of the scale, thereby making it difficult to get a clear picture of what issues matter *most* to educators. This year, another strategy was used. We have focused our analysis on the three issues

that respondents selected, from the list of 56, in response to the statement "identify the three issues that are of the highest priority to you to ensure the success of your work in the next few years." Sixteen of the 56 issues were selected at rates that exceeded random probability and therefore met the test for statistical significance. These issues are the focus of this report. This is not to say that the other 40 issues are unimportant to educators. Many were rated three or higher on scale of zero to four. However, the analysis is focused on those issues that appear to be of *greatest* concern to educators over the next several years.

A second part of this year's analysis that differs from the analyses presented in previous reports, is how the issues are categorized. Rather than sorting the issues into seven predetermined categories of need, the categories emerged from the data itself. Four well-defined categories of need emerged from the data:

1) Developing a standards-based instructional program
2) Creating a supportive and challenging learning environment
3) Engaging all students in learning
4) Ensuring support for the instructional program

These categories are used to illuminate important relationships in the data, as well as to provide structure to the discussion of results.

The third part of the analysis serves to highlight educational research and development needs. The primary purpose of the educator survey is to identify the needs for educational research and development in the Northwest region, both the topics of concern and the types of research and development assistance educators desire. Educators were asked in the survey to indicate the type(s) of research and development assistance they would find most helpful for addressing their three priority issues. From a list of eight types of research and development assistance (plus a write-in option), they were asked to select the types of assistance they would find most helpful. They were also asked two open-ended questions: "What do you believe are the most important professional development needs for your school?" and "During the past two years, what is the single most important factor that has contributed to positive student performance in your school or district?"

The results of these survey analyses are presented in the following pages, including:

1) educators' top sixteen issues in four general areas of need
2) differences in the response rates among groups of respondents to each issue
3) presentation of findings from the Public Survey, where relevant to an issue
4) identification of the types of research and development assistance, including professional development needs, that educators say they would find helpful to address their priority issues

APPENDIX B: EDUCATOR SURVEY

Educational Priorities: A Needs Assessment Survey of Local Schools and Districts in the Northwest 1999

Response Form

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL)

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory periodically conducts a survey to identify current and emerging needs as perceived by educators in the region's schools and districts. This survey is one part of our effort to ensure that our work aligns with the priority needs of education professionals in the Northwest (Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington). You have been selected as part of the sample for our survey.

NWREL is an independent, nonprofit research and development institution established in 1966 to provide educational research and development assistance to local schools and communities. NWREL assists schools and communities by:

1. Developing and disseminating effective educational products and procedures
2. Conducting research on educational needs and problems
3. Providing training and technical assistance in educational planning, management, evaluation, and instruction
4. Serving as an information resource on effective educational programs and processes
5. Evaluating the effectiveness of educational programs and projects
6. Organizing and facilitating networks to improve educational outcomes for children

Your answers to this survey, together with those of other teachers, administrators, school board members and teacher educators throughout the region, will be used by our Board of Directors to set priorities for NWREL activities in the next several years. Please take a few minutes to respond to the survey questions. Part A asks about the importance of a number of issues to your work in public education, Part B seeks your opinion on the priority areas for educational improvement, and Part C asks about your experience with NWREL. Your assistance will help ensure that NWREL can address your needs in the future. Thank you very much for contributing your information and insight.

Part A:
Trends and Issues Impacting Public Education

Listed below are a number of issues that NWREL has identified as possibly affecting the work of educators in K-12. To assist NWREL in setting priorities for its work, *please circle the most appropriate response to the question, "How important is this issue to the success of my work in my school or district?"*

Improving the Results of Schooling	**How important is this issue to the success of my work in my school/district?**				
	Not at all				Very
1. Aligning standards, assessment, instruction and teacher professional development	0	1	2	3	4
2. Integrating curriculum across the subjects	0	1	2	3	4
3. Applying developmentally appropriate instruction in a standards-based educational program	0	1	2	3	4
4. Facilitating students' transition from one level of school to the next	0	1	2	3	4
5. Using available technology to support learning	0	1	2	3	4
6. Actively engaging all students in learning	0	1	2	3	4
7. Fostering student responsibility for their own learning	0	1	2	3	4
8. Enhancing students' technology skills for the world of work	0	1	2	3	4
9. Developing community-based learning experiences for students	0	1	2	3	4
10. Integrating academic and workplace learning	0	1	2	3	4

11. Other important issues related to improving the results of school. (Please list below)

_____

--Improving Assessment and Using Data for Decisions	How important is this issue to the success of my work in my school/district? Not at all				Very
12. Developing classroom assessments that demonstrate student performance	0	1	2	3	4
13. Developing classroom assessments that accommodate cultural and learning differences	0	1	2	3	4
14. Creating graduation credentials that document what students know and can do	0	1	2	3	4
15. Using classroom data and research to improve teaching	0	1	2	3	4
16. Assessing the impact of technology on student learning	0	1	2	3	4
17. Evaluating the effectiveness of your school improvements	0	1	2	3	4
18. Using data and research to make educational decisions	0	1	2	3	4

Other important issues related to assessment and using data for decisions. (Please list below)_____

Ensuring Educational Equity	How important is this issue to the success of my work in my school/district? Not at all				Very
20. Preparing schools and teachers for an increasingly diverse student population	0	1	2	3	4
21. Ensuring that classroom instruction is culturally, ethnically, and gender inclusive	0	1	2	3	4
22. Identifying disparities in performance among students based on race, gender or national origin	0	1	2	3	4
23. Successfully educating limited-English-proficient students	0	1	2	3	4
24. Successfully educating special needs students in the regular classroom	0	1	2	3	4
25. Finding effective strategies for students who are not succeeding in school	0	1	2	3	4
26. Providing adequate support for at-risk kids	0	1	2	3	4
27. Ensuring that all students meet high standards	0	1	2	3	4
28. Ensuring that technology is available to all students	0	1	2	3	4

Other important issues related to ensuring educational equity. (Please list below)_____

63

Strengthening the Education Profession	How important is this issue to the success of my work in my school/district? Not at all				Very
30. Recruiting and retaining qualified personnel	0	1	2	3	4
31. Recruiting and retaining a diverse teaching force	0	1	2	3	4
32. Preparing teachers to help students meet performance standards	0	1	2	3	4
33. Using local teacher expertise for staff development	0	1	2	3	4
34. Allocating adequate time to develop expertise in and implement school improvement	0	1	2	3	4
35. Evaluating the impact of professional development efforts	0	1	2	3	4
36. Expanding teachers' use of technology for improved instruction.	0	1	2	3	4
37. Giving teachers a voice in policy decisions	0	1	2	3	4

38. Other important issues related to strengthening the education profession. (Please list below)

_____

Supporting Children and Families	How important is this issue to the success of my work in my school/district? Not at all				Very
39. Strengthening partnerships between families and schools	0	1	2	3	4
40. Developing structures that will facilitate school and teacher communication with families	0	1	2	3	4
41. Educating all parents about school improvements and how improvements will affect their children.	0	1	2	3	4
42. Preparing young children from infancy to school-age to be ready for learning.	0	1	2	3	4
43. Developing parenting skills in families	0	1	2	3	4
44. Providing family literacy programs	0	1	2	3	4
45. Integrating school, community, and private resources to meet the total needs of students	0	1	2	3	4
46. Providing human services at the school for families	0	1	2	3	4

Other important issues related to supporting children and families. (Please list below)_____

Developing Healthy Schools and Communities	How important is this issue to the success of my work in my school/district? Not at all Very				
48. Creating a learning environment that is safe, supportive and productive for all students	0	1	2	3	4
49. Fostering positive student behavior, attitude and motivation	0	1	2	3	4
50. Preventing incidents of violence on and around schools	0	1	2	3	4
51. Implementing effective substance abuse prevention strategies	0	1	2	3	4
52. Developing effective classroom management and school-wide discipline policies	0	1	2	3	4
53. Creating after school programs for students	0	1	2	3	4
54. Involving parents and the community in school improvement	0	1	2	3	4
55. Agreeing on the responsibilities that schools, families and the community hold for educating all students	0	1	2	3	4

56. *Other important issues related to developing healthy schools and communities.* (Please list below)

_____

Supporting the Public Education	How important is this issue to the success of my work in my school/district? Not at all Very				
57. Strengthening local community understanding and support for public education	0	1	2	3	4
58. Assuring sufficient school funding	0	1	2	3	4
59. Assuring equitable funding among schools with varying needs	0	1	2	3	4
60. Managing schools in the face of unpredictable funding and changing policies	0	1	2	3	4
61. Ensuring local control of local schools	0	1	2	3	4
62. Identifying effective educational practices that are affordable	0	1	2	3	4

Other important issues related to supporting public education. (Please list below)_____

64. During the past two years, what is the single most important factor that has contributed to positive student performance in your school or district? _____

_____

_____

_____

65. What do you believe are the most important professional development needs for your school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Part B: Priority Areas for Educational Improvement

From the previous section (Part A, questions 1-63), **identify the three issues that are of highest priority to you to ensure the success of your work in the next few years**. Place these issue numbers in the three spaces in the column on the left, below.

Next **check the box(es) which indicate the types of research and development assistance you would find most helpful** for addressing the issues you listed in the column to the left. (The items in the column to the right describe the kinds of work that NWREL performs.)

Top three issues of importance to your work (select issue number from PartA)	**What type of research and development assistance would be most helpful to address this issue? Check the most important to you.**
Issue Number:_____	1. Conduct studies on the issue 2. Develop summaries of existing research on the issue 3. Describe promising practices used by others to address the issue 4. Develop models or solutions to address the issue 5. Provide training to address the issue 6. Provide on-site technical assistance to address the issue 7. Evaluate your school's efforts to address the issue 8. Bring educators together to share ideas Other Assistance(Describe)
Issue Number:_____	1. Conduct studies on the issue 2. Develop summaries of existing research on the issue 3. Describe promising practices used by others to address the issue 4. Develop models or solutions to address the issue 5. Provide training to address the issue 6. Provide on-site technical assistance to address the issue 7. Evaluate your school's efforts to address the issue 8. Bring educators together to share ideas Other Assistance(Describe)
Issue Number:_____	1. Conduct studies on the issue 2. Develop summaries of existing research on the issue 3. Describe promising practices used by others to address the issue 4. Develop models or solutions to address the issue 5. Provide training to address the issue 6. Provide on-site technical assistance to address the issue 7. Evaluate your school's efforts to address the issue 8. Bring educators together to share ideas Other Assistance(Describe)

Part C: Your experience with NWREL

Please check the box(es) that indicate your experience with NWREL in the past two years

- ☐ I have not heard of NWREL before.
- ☐ I have heard of NWREL's work, but only indirectly.
- ☐ I have requested information on research or proven practices from NWREL.
- ☐ I have used materials from NWREL.
- ☐ I have visited NWREL's web site.
- ☐ I have participated in NWREL conferences and/or trainings. Topics_____
  _____
- ☐ NWREL has provided technical assistance to my school or district. Focus of TA:_____

What grade level(s) are you responsible for in your position? (Circle all grades that apply)

P K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Thank you very much for your cooperation and assistance!

Your responses will enable us to serve the region's education professionals more effectively.

Please correct the address below if necessary. (Survey responses will be kept confidential!)

Return the completed survey in the enclosed business reply envelope.

☐ Check this box if you would like a complimentary copy of the survey results available November, 1999.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

APPENDIX C: 1999 NWREL PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

(Response options are listed in parentheses after the question.)

1. . Have you yourself visited a public school in the past year? (Yes. No. Don't know/not sure. Refused)

2. If yes, which, if any, of the following activities have you done in the "public" schools in the past year? (Yes. No. Done at private school. Work in public school.)
   - Have you attended a public school sports event?
   - Have you attended a public school music, drama, dance or art event?
   - Have you had a parent-teacher conference or some other meeting with a teacher?
   - Taken part in a school fund-raising event?
   - Volunteered in a public school or classroom?
   - Attended a meeting of a parent-teacher organization or a booster club?
   - Attended a school advisory or site council meeting?
   - Attended a school board meeting?
   - Taken an evening or weekend class in a school?

3. Would you like to be more involved in school decision-making? (Yes. No. Don't know/not sure. Refused)

4. From what you know or may have heard, do you believe that the schools in your area receive enough money to educate ALL kids adequately? IF YES, Do they receive more than enough money, or enough money? IF NO, Do they receive not quite enough money, or way too little money? (More than enough. Enough money. Not quite enough money. Way too little money. Don't know/Not sure. Refused.)

5. Do you think the money available for education is being distributed so that each school is getting a fair share? IF YES, Do you strongly or somewhat agree that it is being fairly distributed? IF NO, Do you strongly or somewhat disagree that it is being fairly distributed?

6. Now I am going to read a list of things that could be taught in public schools. For each please tell me whether you think the public schools should emphasize it a lot, somewhat, a little or not at all. (A lot. Somewhat. A little. Not at all. Don't know. Refused.)
   - Basic skills such as reading, writing, math, speaking and listening?
   - Subjects such as history, geography, and science?
   - The arts, including subjects such as music, art, theater, or dance?
   - Health and physical education?
   - Training for specific jobs?
   - Critical thinking and decision-making skills?
   - General career exploration?
   - Knowing how to learn after "leaving" high school and how to deal with change?
   - How to be an informed and responsible citizen?
   - Social skills?
   - The ability to use computers and new technologies

7. Now, changing the subject. Increasingly, community and social service organizations and schools are working together to serve children and families. Which of the following services do you think should be provided at public schools? (Yes. No. Don't know/not sure. Refused)

   - Full service medical and dental clinics?
   - On-site drug and alcohol treatment?
   - Mental health counseling?
   - Family support such as welfare assistance or employment counseling?
   - Education programs for parents, such as parenting classes, adult basic education, and literacy programs?
   - Before and after school childcare?
   - Organized after school arts, recreation, and educational activities for junior high and high school students?

8. Have you heard anything about higher performance standards being set for students in <STATE > ? (Yes. No. Don't know/not sure. Refused)

9. If, yes. Based on what you know or have heard, would you say that the new performance standards are appropriate for ALL students? IF NOT ALL, Do you think new standards are appropriate for most students, for some students, only few students or not for anyone?

10. In recent years, a good deal of attention has focused on ensuring that students achieve to high standards. I am going to read you a list of people. Please tell me how much responsibility these people should have in DECIDING what students in your local schools must learn. For each one, do you think they should have a lot of responsibility, a moderate level, or no responsibility for deciding what students must learn.
    - Local school staff.
    - Parents and community members.
    - Business and labor leaders.
    - State officials.
    - Federal officials.
    - National education experts.

11. Now that you've told me who you think should decide WHAT students should learn, I would like your opinion on how responsible the following people should be for making sure that students achieve these high standards.

    - Local school staff.
    - Parents.
    - Students themselves.
    - Employers.
    - People who don't have kids in school.

12. In your opinion, how much would the following things help to improve the quality of teaching? For each please tell me if you think it would improve teaching a lot, somewhat, or not at all? (A lot. Somewhat. Or, not at all. Don't know/Not sure. Refused.)

    - Paying teachers according to how well their students perform on tests.
    - Providing better supervision and evaluation of teachers.
    - Making it easier to get rid of teachers who aren't teaching well.
    - Ensuring that teachers have more resources and support in the classroom.
    - Providing time and money for additional teacher training?
    - Requiring teachers to pass a competency test?

13. Teachers are concerned about the lack of motivation among some of today's students. Which of the following do you think MOST interferes with students trying to do their best in school in your local schools?

    - Poor teaching
    - The curriculum not being relevant
    - Poor student attitudes
    - Lack of family involvement
    - Unsafe and disorderly schools
    - Other (Specify:)
    - All Equal (PROBE FOR ONE)
    - Don't know/Not sure
    - Refused

Respondent data:

Just a few more questions to help us group your answers with other people.

14. Including yourself, how many people live in your household?
15. Do you have any children in the following age groups:
    - Under the age of 5
    - 5 to 12 years
    - 13 to 18 years
    - No children in household

16. Are your children in public, private or home school settings?

17. What is your age?

18. What is your home zip code?

19. Which of the following best describes your race or ethnicity?
    - White, and not of Hispanic origin
    - African American or Black, and not of Hispanic origin
    - American Indian or Alaska Native
    - Asian or Pacific Islander
    - Hispanic

20. Is your yearly household income from all sources...
    - Below $20,000
    - Between $20,000 and $50,000
    - Between $50,000 and $75,000
    - Between $75,000 and $100,000
    - Or above $100,000?

21. Gender
22. State

APPENDIX D
PRIORITY AREAS FOR EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT

Northwest Educators' Selection of the "Top Three Issues of Importance to Your Work"

The following table shows the percentages of respondents who selected each listed issue as a "top three issue of importance to your work." The issues were selected out of an overall list of 56 issues. Note: Rankings and percentages are shown only for issues which were selected at rates that exceeded random probability (0.95 binomial distribution probability). See Appendix B for the complete text of the survey instrument.

	All		Board Chairs		Principals		Supts.		Teachers	
Issue	**Rank**	**Pct**	**Rank**	**Pct**	**Rank**	**Pct**	**Rank**	**Pct**	**Rank**	**Pct**
Aligning standards, assessment, instruction, teacher development	1	29%	2	20%	1	36%	1	40%	2	17%
Assuring sufficient school funding	2	17%	1	32%	4	12%	2	23%	4	15%
Finding effective strategies for students who are not succeeding in school	3	17%	6	14%	2	19%	5	13%	3	16%
Actively engaging all students in learning	4	15%	4	15%	3	16%	4	15%	6	14%
Fostering student responsibility for their own learning	5	14%	8	11%	6	11%	13	8%	1	20%
Creating a learning environment that is safe, supportive, productive for all students	6	12%	5	15%	5	12%	7	10%	7	12%
Fostering positive student behavior, attitude, and motivation	7	11%			9	9%	14	8%	5	15%
Applying developmentally appropriate instruction in a standards-based program	8	10%			7	11%	6	10%	9	8%
Developing classroom assessments that demonstrate student performance	9	9%			8	10%	3	15%		
Recruiting and retaining qualified personnel	10	9%	3	17%	11	8%	8	10%	12	8%

Appendix D: Priority Areas for Educational Improvement (Continued)

	All		Board Chairs		Principals		Superint's		Teachers	
Issue	**Rank**	**Pct**	**Rank**	**Pct**	**Rank**	**Pct**	**Rank**	**Pct**	**Rank**	**Pct**
Allocating adequate time to develop expertise in and implement school improvement	11	8%			10	9%			8	10%
Strengthening partnerships between families and schools	12	8%			13	7%	9	9%	11	8%
Strengthening local community understanding and support for public education	13	7%	7	14%					13	8%
Preparing teachers to help students meet performance standards	14	7%			15	7%	11	8%		
Integrating curriculum across the subjects	15	7%			12	8%	15	8%		
Using available technology to support learning	16	6%					10	8%		
Preparing young children from infancy to school-age to be ready for learning									10	8%
Ensuring that all students meet high standards							12	8%		
Using classroom data and research to improve teaching					14	7%				
Preparing schools and teachers for an increasingly diverse student population					16	7%				

Number of respondents:

Total N = 1733

Board Chairs = 133; Principals = 663; Superintendents = 326; Teachers = 611

APPENDIX E: ISSUES IMPACTING PUBLIC EDUCATION

Northwest Educators' Importance Ratings of 56 Issues

Northwest educators were asked to rate the importance of 56 specified issues to the success of their work (exact wording of the question: "How important is this issue to the success of my work in my school/district?"). Each issue was rated on a scale from 0 to 4 (0 = Not at all important, 4 = Very important). See Appendix B for the complete text of the survey instrument.

	Issue Importance		
	Percentages		Means
	High+Very High	Very High Only	(0 to 4 scale)
Fostering positive student behavior, attitude, and motivation	97%	79%	3.76
Actively engaging all students in learning	96%	79%	3.75
Fostering student responsibility for their own learning	95%	68%	3.63
Creating a learning environment that is safe, supportive, and productive for all students	94%	79%	3.74
Assuring sufficient school funding	94%	78%	3.71
Finding effective strategies for students who are not succeeding in school	92%	66%	3.58
Ensuring that all students meet high standards	91%	58%	3.48
Preparing teachers to help students meet performance standards	91%	59%	3.47
Strengthening local community understanding and support for public education	91%	60%	3.50
Identifying effective education practices that are affordable	91%	53%	3.44
Aligning standards, assessment, instruction, and teacher professional development	90%	66%	3.55
Preventing incidents of violence on and around schools	90%	73%	3.61
Developing effective classroom management and school-wide discipline policies	90%	65%	3.54
Providing adequate support for at-risk kids	89%	53%	3.41
Allocating adequate time to develop expertise in and implement school improvement	89%	55%	3.41
Strengthening partnerships between families and schools	89%	55%	3.43

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Appendix E: Issues Impacting Public Education (Continued)

	Issue Importance		
	Percentages		Means
	High+Very High	Very High Only	(0 to 4 scale)
Managing schools in the face of unpredictable funding and changing policies	89%	59%	3.45
Recruiting and retaining qualified personnel	88%	69%	3.53
Developing classroom assessments that demonstrate student performance	87%	53%	3.39
Evaluating the effectiveness of your school improvements	86%	46%	3.29
Developing structures that will facilitate school and teacher communication with families	86%	48%	3.33
Educating all parents about school improvements and how improvements will affect their children	85%	43%	3.27
Involving parents and the community in school improvement	85%	44%	3.26
Agreeing on the responsibilities that schools, families and the community hold for educating all students	85%	49%	3.32
Expanding teachers' use of technology for improved instruction	84%	41%	3.22
Assuring equitable funding among schools with varying needs	84%	60%	3.40
Using available technology to support learning	83%	38%	3.19
Using classroom data and research to improve teaching	83%	44%	3.25
Applying developmentally appropriate instruction in a standards-based educational program	82%	43%	3.25
Using data and research to make educational decisions	82%	45%	3.25
Ensuring that technology is available to all students	82%	43%	3.22
Implementing effective substance abuse prevention strategies	82%	48%	3.26
Enhancing students' technology skills for the world of work	80%	36%	3.13
Giving teachers a voice in policy decisions	79%	42%	3.16
Integrating school, community, and private resources to meet the total needs of students	78%	39%	3.13
Ensuring local control of local schools	78%	45%	3.18
Using local teacher expertise for staff development	77%	33%	3.05

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Appendix E: Issues Impacting Public Education (Continued)

	Issue Importance		
	Percentages		Means
	High+Very High	Very High Only	(0 to 4 scale)
Integrating curriculum across the subjects	76%	35%	3.07
Evaluating the impact of professional development efforts	76%	31%	3.02
Preparing young children from infancy to school-age to be ready for learning	74%	45%	3.09
Preparing schools and teachers for an increasingly diverse student population	73%	38%	3.05
Successfully educating special needs students in the regular classroom	72%	34%	2.98
Recruiting and retaining a diverse teaching force	72%	37%	2.99
Facilitating students' transition from one level of school to the next	71%	31%	2.97
Developing parenting skills in families	71%	40%	2.99
Ensuring that classroom instruction is culturally, ethnically, and gender inclusive	68%	30%	2.89
Developing classroom assessments that accommodate cultural and learning differences	66%	29%	2.86
Creating graduation credentials that document what students know and can do	66%	30%	2.82
Creating after school programs for students	65%	30%	2.84
Assessing the impact of technology on student learning	64%	20%	2.78
Providing family literacy programs	64%	31%	2.82
Integrating academic and workplace learning	61%	21%	2.71
Developing community-based learning experiences for students	59%	20%	2.69
Successfully educating limited-English-proficient students	59%	29%	2.65
Providing human services at the school for families	54%	21%	2.56
Identifying disparities in performance among students based on race, gender, or national origin	52%	18%	2.55

Number of Respondents:
Total N = 1852
Board Chairs = 149; Principals = 707; Superintendents = 352; Teachers = 644

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